

**University of Alberta**  
**COVID-19 Vaccination Working Group**  
**Report and Recommendations**

**March 15, 2021**

## **1. Introduction**

The university's COVID-19 Planning Oversight Committee established a working group to develop recommendations in response to the availability of COVID-19 vaccinations and the subsequent impact on university operations.

The purpose of this report is to identify the major factors impacting the university due to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines and provide a set of recommendations for consideration by the President's Executive Committee. In developing the recommendations the working group relied on the expert advice of external organizations including Alberta Health Services (AHS), the Public Health Agency of Canada and both the provincial and federal governments.

The report's recommendations were developed based on two fundamental assumptions. First, that even once vaccinations are widely available there will be people who, for a variety of reasons (included on the basis of protected grounds), choose not to receive the vaccine. Accordingly, there will be people who are and are not vaccinated in our community. Second and consequently, that many of the pandemic controls currently in place will need to remain in place for some time into the future.

Further, the report's recommendations are being made at a point in time and will need to be monitored and updated as additional research becomes available, the situation evolves and as direction from public health agencies and governments is revised. Although these recommendations will need to be updated as more research becomes available, it is expected that at a minimum, they will need to be in place throughout the Fall 2021 term and may very well carry forward throughout the Winter 2022 term.

This report contains 24 recommendations, the five primary recommendations are as follows:

### Primary Recommendations

#### Public Health Measures

***Until further research is completed on COVID-19 including the long-term efficacy of the vaccinations establishing a better understanding of the impacts of herd immunity, and until the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) revises public health measures, it is recommended that the university maintain and revise, as required, its Safety Measures General Directives including a section on vaccinations and the ongoing use of masks, physical distancing and other public***

**health measures. The institution should be prepared to maintain such measures through at least the Fall Term 2021 or until the CMOH provides alternative guidance. (Recommendation #1)**

#### Mandating Vaccinations

**Legal advice on mandating vaccines<sup>1</sup> and/or requiring proof of immunization continues to evolve including whether vaccinations should be mandatory in a high risk working context. At the present time and generally, on the basis of the university's obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, human rights law and privacy issues, as well as collective agreement implications, it is recommended that the university does not mandate that all employees, students, contractors or visitors must receive a COVID-19 vaccination or that the university requires these groups to provide proof of immunization as a condition of employment or of entry into university facilities. (Recommendation #2)**

#### Student and Staff Duty to Accommodate

**From the beginning of the pandemic, the university has implemented programs and strategies to accommodate students and employees who, on the basis of a protected ground, have been impacted by operational changes due to COVID-19. It is recommended that the university review and update its programs and strategies as appropriate to take reasonable steps to accommodate students and employees who are impacted by operational changes due to COVID-19, including those who cannot or choose not to be vaccinated on the basis of a protected ground. (Recommendation #6 and #14)**

#### Communications

**It is recommended that the university, and its managers, support the above recommendations by amplifying vaccine rollout information available through public health authorities and clearly communicating:**

- **the university's support of vaccine use in COVID-19 response,**
  - **vaccine availability on or in proximity to U of A campuses,**
  - **any impacts to university operations as vaccinations are made available, and,**
  - **how employees, students and visitors can be accommodated as needed.**
- (Recommendation #24)**

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, phrases like "mandatory vaccinations" do not mean the administration of a vaccine against a person's consent. Individual's rights to bodily integrity would prevent that. Rather, what is meant, in the context of this report is whether the university can, either as an employer or post-secondary educational institute, require that its employees, students and other visitors to campus be vaccinated as a condition of being allowed to enter the workplace, the learning environment or the spaces open to the public.

## Campus Health and Safety

**It is recommended that the university continue to advocate with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, the prioritization of all students engaged in practicums associated with teaching and health service delivery and university high risk service workers/COVID-19 researchers for receipt of the vaccine. The university further encourages Alberta Health to consider the prioritization of all university faculty and staff to facilitate the university's ability to maximize the return to in-person instruction. (Recommendation # 19)**

### **2. Scientific Context**

There continues to be a great deal of uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 vaccinations, their availability, and vaccination schedules. There is also scientific uncertainty on how the vaccinations affect potential asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19 between a vaccinated and unvaccinated person. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on the duration of protection of the COVID-19 vaccines. Current research does show that the existing vaccines are 80% to 95% effective in either preventing infection, or preventing symptoms of COVID-19 in the vaccinated person (NEJM Dec 2020, 383: 2603-2615 and COVID Vax Fast Facts, Dec, 2020 Alberta College of Family Physicians, College of Family Physicians of Canada). However, more research is required to fully understand the impact of these vaccinations and what it will mean in terms of the need to continue existing health and safety practices and for the return to normal campus operations. It is also important to note that the research and clinical trials to date have focused on the age group of 18 years of age and older. Up to 25% of our student population in residence is 17 years of age when entering university and therefore, would not be eligible to receive any of the approved vaccinations until they turn 18.

The globe is now dealing with new variants of the disease emerging from areas such as the UK, South Africa and other jurisdictions. What is known so far is that these new variants are more contagious with more research required to assess whether the variants may have more serious health impacts, including a higher mortality rate. Although it appears that the current vaccinations are effective against the new variants, more research is required as well as monitoring of this evolving situation.

***Recommendation 1: Until further research is completed on COVID-19 including the long-term efficacy of the vaccinations establishing a better understanding of the impacts of herd immunity, and until the Alberta Chief Medical Officer (CMOH) of Health revises public health measures, it is recommended that the university maintain and revise, as required, its Safety Measures General Directives including a section on vaccinations and the ongoing use of masks, physical distancing and other public health measures. The institution should be prepared to maintain such measures through at least the Fall Term 2021 or until the CMOH provides alternative guidance.***

### 3. Legal Issues

There is an extensive range of legal issues associated with mandating vaccinations along with areas of jurisdictional responsibility between the federal and provincial governments. There is also context-specific legislation that applies to certain activities and operations including, for example, the application of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, *Public Health Act*, *Occupiers' Liability Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to residence services and labour and employment operations, respectively. There is also legislation which applies more broadly to the university's operations such as, for example, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP Act). The purpose of this document is not to provide an extensive analysis of all legal issues, but rather a general overview of what legal experts are advising.

There is no legislation in Alberta that makes vaccinations mandatory in the context of post-secondary institutions or any indication that the provincial government will make COVID-19 vaccinations mandatory. As a post-secondary institution and employer, the university has obligations to take reasonable steps to ensure a safe learning and living environment, and, under Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation, a safe working environment.

With respect to employment, in general, the view of the legal profession is divided. On the basis of an employee's right to bodily integrity, human and privacy rights, some lawyers hold the opinion that employers cannot mandate their employees to take the COVID-19 vaccination and others, on the basis of OHS legislation, hold the opinion that employers can.

Presently, we believe that while the university's obligations under OHS legislation would not in every working context justify a requirement that employees receive a COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment, OHS obligations may provide a basis for mandating COVID-19 vaccinations as a condition of employment in certain high-risk working contexts and areas of activity. In this regard, we note that there are some private sector organizations who have developed draft policies that would require employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Whether a certain working context or area of activity is one in which a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination could be justified on the basis of OHS considerations would need to be assessed on a case by case basis with credible information. In addition, if a mandatory vaccination policy was applied to the employees of a high risk working context/area of activity, it would be subject to the university's duty to accommodate, up to the point of undue hardship. This would include any employee who could not, on the basis of a protected ground (e.g. medical, religious beliefs), receive a COVID-19 vaccination. Undue hardship would be reached only where it could be established that a COVID-19 vaccination is a *bona fide occupational requirement* (or BFOR). Whether or not the university could accommodate a given employee would need to be assessed on a case by case basis. As discussed in more detail below, similar reasoning applies to the university's students.

***Recommendation 2: Legal advice on mandating vaccines<sup>2</sup> and/or requiring proof of immunization continues to evolve including whether vaccinations should be mandatory in a high risk working context. At the present time and generally, on the basis of the university's obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, human rights law and privacy issues, as well as collective agreement implications, it is recommended that the university does not mandate that all employees, students, contractors or visitors must receive a COVID-19 vaccination or that the university requires these groups to provide proof of immunization as a condition of employment or of entry into university facilities.***

#### **4. Privacy and Records Management**

There are extensive privacy and records management issues associated with asking or requiring university employees, students or contractors to provide proof of immunization, including whether, under the FOIP Act the university has the authority to ask or require proof of immunization.

Under section 33(c) of the FOIP Act, the university has authority to collect personal information from students, employees, contractors and visitors, if the information relates directly to and is necessary for an operating program or activity of the public body. Due to the need for ongoing research on the effectiveness of the vaccinations, the impact of new variants and the fact that it will take significant time to vaccinate a large segment of the population, the university will need to maintain present controls as outlined in its Safety Measures General Directives (SMGD), maintain remote working from home and limit the number of in-person services and operations. This then calls into question both implementing a policy that would require employees/students/contractors/visitors to be vaccinated and whether the collection of proof of immunization information is actually necessary under section 33(c).

The other significant records management issue under the FOIP Act is the collection, filing, maintenance, protection of, access to and disposal of this personal health information. If the university were to mandate vaccinations, it would have to set up processes for employees/students/contractors/visitors on how this information is collected. This would require significant staff time across the university, new resources and some type of secure system(s) that was capable of supporting tens of thousands of records. Furthermore, the collection of this information would require confirmation of the type of documentation acceptable as an official record verifying an individual's vaccination status. The Information and Privacy and Record Management Offices would need to be engaged upfront to put the necessary processes in place if the university were to mandate vaccinations then collect the necessary supporting documentation.

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, phrases like "mandatory vaccinations" do not mean the administration of a vaccine against a person's consent. Individual's rights to bodily integrity would prevent that. Rather, what is meant, in the context of this report is whether the university can, either as an employer or post-secondary educational institute, require that its employees, students and other visitors to campus be vaccinated as a condition of being allowed to enter the workplace, the learning environment or the spaces open to the public.

***Recommendation 3: It is recommended that for FOIP reasons, logistical and resource issues, that the university does not implement any requirement to provide proof of immunization in order to access university facilities.***

## **5. Human Resource Issues**

The university operates in both a unionized and non-unionized environment where the employment relationship is governed under negotiated collective agreements or individual employment contracts, respectively. There is nothing within the collective agreements or employment contracts that would prevent the university from mandating vaccinations or requiring proof of immunization. Nonetheless, in the unionized context, there are processes within the collective agreements that would enable employees, through their associations, to challenge such decisions if made by the university.

### Prior mandatory vaccinate or mask policies decisions

There have been several cases across Canada whereby unions have challenged healthcare employers' "vaccinate or mask" (VOM) policies in the context of influenza. The courts' decisions are divided. In cases where the employer did not establish with sufficient evidence that the flu vaccination and masking are effective to prevent transmission of the flu, the court found the policy unreasonable. On the other hand, where this evidence was provided, courts have upheld VOM policies. Several legal views indicate in the context of COVID-19, arbitrators are more likely to uphold as reasonable similar VOM policies given the greater lethality of COVID-19, along with available evidence that establishes the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccination and masking in preventing contraction or transmission of the disease.

### Duty to accommodate

There is general agreement in the legal community that where an employer implements a policy requiring its employees to be vaccinated as a condition of employment, it would be subject to a duty to accommodate.

As vaccinations become more readily available, there may be a percentage of employees who refuse to be vaccinated. In these circumstances, the employer has a duty to accommodate those employees, to the point of undue hardship on the university, if the basis for the refusal is a protected ground such as a medical reason or a religious belief. Apart from where undue hardship can be established, reasonable accommodations could include strategies such as allowing the employee to work from home, putting in place specific health and safety measures, scheduling of work shifts etc.

The university may also encounter situations where a third party requires a university employee to provide proof of vaccination as a condition of entry into their space or site. In the event the

employee, for medical reasons or on protected grounds, does not provide proof of vaccination, the university may need to consider the need to accommodate that employee.

#### COVID-19 testing in the workplace

In a more recent healthcare case in Ontario in a unionized environment, the arbitrator ruled that the employer's policy requiring its employees to be tested for COVID-19 was reasonable, after weighing the intrusiveness of a COVID-19 test against preventing the spread of COVID-19 in a retirement home (Workplace COVID-19 Vaccinations Policies L. Sokolov & T Poynter). It is important to note that the setting in this ruling was associated with a retirement home where the population is highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and where mortality rates have been much higher. Given the significant difference in settings between higher education and a retirement/healthcare facility, along with the different demographics, it is not certain that, apart from similar high risk contexts, an arbitrator would rule in favour of an employer within a higher education setting if they were to introduce mandatory COVID-19 testing or the requirement for employees to produce proof of immunization.

#### International travel

As the federal government is responsible for immigration and border controls, they could mandate that any individual entering into Canada must verify their vaccination status. With respect to airline pre-boarding and at land border crossings, the federal government has already instituted negative COVID-19 test results and quarantine requirements upon entering the country. Canadian international travel and entry requirements is an area that continues to evolve with a trend toward more stringent restrictions being implemented over time. Any university employee or student entering Canada would need to comply with federal regulations, one of which may include verification of COVID-19 vaccination status. Similarly any university employee or student traveling abroad will need to comply with the entry requirements of the host country or host institution which may include verification of COVID-19 vaccination status.

#### Compliance with health and safety measures

Regardless of the university's response to vaccinations or proof of immunization, it does have the ability to implement other reasonable health and safety measures as outlined in the university's SMGD and use articles within collective agreements or employment contracts to hold employees accountable for their compliance with university directives.

***Recommendation 4: Based on precedent and to avoid potential challenges by the unions, it is recommended that, other than in certain high risk working contexts or areas of activity, the university not mandate that employees must receive a COVID-19 vaccination or require employees to present proof of immunization.***

***Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the university continue to use its existing practices to hold employees accountable for compliance with its safety measures.***

***Recommendation 6: From the beginning of the pandemic, the university has implemented programs and strategies to provide a safe working environment and accommodate employees impacted by operational changes due to COVID-19. It is recommended that Human Resources, Health, Safety & Environment review and update its programs and strategies to take reasonable steps to accommodate those employees who cannot or choose not to be vaccinated on protected grounds up to the point of undue hardship.***

***Recommendation 7: Further, to recommendation 4, if the university mandates that employees in certain high risk working contexts or areas of activity must receive a COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment, it is recommended that Human Resources, Health, Safety & Environment, work with Homewood Health to develop processes to assess those employees who cannot take the vaccine due to medical reasons.***

***Recommendation 8: It is recommended that the university continue to keep employees informed of changing travel requirements and restrictions including the employee's responsibility to be in compliance with these changing requirements and restrictions.***

## **6. Student Issues**

Issues associated with the vaccination of students must be examined from both a domestic and international student perspective. The Alberta government has confirmed that once a universal vaccination program is in place in Alberta, all students, including international students who are living, working or going to school in Alberta, will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine free of charge, subject to vaccine availability.

The legal considerations pertaining to mandating vaccinations for students is generally the same as for employees as it similarly involves the university's obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure a safe learning and living environment (though not derived from OHS legislation) and its responsibilities under human rights and privacy law.

### Duty to accommodate

Like employees, as vaccinations become more readily available, there may be a percentage of students who refuse vaccination. In these circumstances, the university has a responsibility to accommodate these students, to the point of undue hardship on the university, if the basis for the refusal is a protected ground.

### International students and travel

Currently there are no specific vaccinations that are required by the federal government when entering Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/vaccination-adults.html>)



When international students do travel to Canada they must comply with all immigration and border controls. Currently, when travelling by air or land to Canada there is the requirement to provide a negative COVID-19 test result prior to airline boarding or at a land border crossing. When entering Canada there is no requirement at this time to verify that you have received a COVID-19 vaccination and that the vaccination received is acceptable to the Government of Canada. However, this is subject to change. In certain circumstances, international students may not be able to meet these immigration and border control requirements due to the student's country of residence and or the inability of that country to have access to a Government of Canada approved vaccine. In these circumstances, the university will need to assess its responsibilities and obligations to assist these students and accommodate them through remote delivery or other options.

The university must also consider its international student population who have registered or initiated their programs at the university, but may not be able to travel to Canada due to federal government requirements or border restrictions. In these cases the university will need to continue its practices of ensuring students are able to participate in their academic programs and access campus services through such strategies as remote learning or other support mechanisms.

#### International exchange or study abroad programs

In addition to international students coming to Canada, the university has extensive international exchange and/or study abroad programs. Currently, the university is prohibiting any education abroad programs due to the health and safety of university students and current international travel restrictions. As vaccinations become available travel restrictions may be relaxed, however specific travel and entry restrictions will be country specific. Once international travel resumes, the University will not make vaccinations mandatory as a condition for participation in education abroad. However students may be required to be vaccinated to comply with the requirements of host countries or institutions. The university will need to continually monitor the situation and re-assess international exchange/study abroad programs on a case by case basis.

#### Student Residences

Based on a review of residence operations in Canada, at this time, no Canadian university residence has imposed a requirement for students to be vaccinated or provide proof of immunization as a condition of living in residence. In a review of the *Residential Tenancies, Landlord and Tenant and Occupiers' Liability Acts*, there is no express provision within this legislation that would allow Residence Services to mandate vaccinations or require students to provide proof of vaccination.

To protect the health and safety of students in residence, Residence Services has developed its residence operations plan for Fall 2021. In the case of dorm style rooms, Residence Services will limit occupancy to one student per room. As well, food services have continually modified their operations in compliance with public health orders. In the case of apartment style rooms,

there will be no restrictions to the number of bedrooms occupied within an apartment. Apartment style rooms have been assessed as similar to that of any family living in a common residence. To protect the health and safety of students living in residence, Residence Services has developed health and safety practices that are appropriate to the various types of residence operations. Given the proposed recommendation not to mandate vaccinations for the general university population nor to provide proof of immunization, and in consideration of the health and safety practices in place, it is not recommended at this time that students in residence be required to be vaccinated or provide proof of immunization as a condition for living in residence. It is essential that Residence Services continue to actively promote proper COVID-19 health and safety practices and educate their community about the importance of adhering to the university's SMGD and the benefits of obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine.

### Athletics and Recreation

An important segment of the university student population is involved in varsity athletics. Many of the varsity teams must follow national governing body regulations including compliance with COVID-19 protocols. There is no indication at this time that any Canadian athletic regulatory body will be mandating vaccinations for its athletes. As public health measures are modified and varsity athletics resume, it is essential that university varsity teams continue to comply with national governing body COVID-19 protocols as well as any university specific varsity team protocols that have been implemented.

Many students, staff, faculty and community members participate in physical and recreation activities on campus. As public health measures are modified, recreation facility operators and programmers are required to comply with specific health measures identified by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. For some sport and recreation clubs, an independent governing body may provide additional guidance with regard to mandatory vaccinations for participation in that activity. At this time, the university has no plans to require mandatory vaccinations or proof of immunization in order to participate in sport and recreation activities within its facilities.

### Student placements and practicums

Some employers may require employees to be immunized as part of that organization's policy or as a required precondition of employment. Some employers may also require that employees present proof of immunization. (Alberta Government COVID-19 Vaccination Q & A, January 2021) Currently, Alberta Health Services (AHS) has not mandated that their employees be vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide proof of immunization. As many of our students go into healthcare settings, they will need to meet the health and safety practices within those settings including the possible need for vaccinations for *bona fide* occupational reasons. Again, if the student refuses to be vaccinated or provide proof of immunization, the university may need to consider options to accommodate the student's practicum requirements if the refusal is based on a protected ground.

Faculties are encouraged to consider whether or how they might accommodate students who have, as an essential element of a degree program, practicum placements with organizations that may require, as a condition of entry into their spaces, that students be vaccinated.

#### Compliance with health and safety measures

As with employees, the university has set out health and safety measures that students must follow while on campus. Regardless of whether a student has been vaccinated or not, if the university continues to have COVID-19 health and safety measures in place, all students are required to comply with those measures. If students fail to comply they could be subject to discipline under the *Code of Student Behaviour*.

***Recommendation 9: In alignment with Recommendation 2, at the present time and generally, on the basis of the university's obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, human rights law and privacy issues, it is recommended that the university does not mandate that all students must receive a COVID-19 vaccination or that the university requires students to provide proof of immunization as a condition of enrolment in the university or living in residence facilities.***

***Recommendation 10: It is recommended that the university, the Faculties and the Centre for Teaching and Learning, continue to support instructors to enhance remote delivery options for all students completing their programs through remote delivery.***

***Recommendation 11: It is recommended that the university continue to keep students informed of changing travel requirements and restrictions, of the student's responsibility to be in compliance with these changing requirements and restrictions and that the university take reasonable steps to implement programs to support international students to assist them in complying with federal government entry requirements.***

***Recommendation 12: It is recommended that the university continue to restrict international education abroad programs but monitor the situation as vaccinations become more readily available and as international travel restrictions are modified.***

***Recommendation 13: It is recommended that residence health and safety practices and dormitory living guidelines continue to be updated to align with public health measures, that measures are in place to achieve student residence compliance and that the health and safety practices remain in effect at least through the Fall 2021 term.***

***Recommendation 14: From the beginning of the pandemic, the university has implemented programs and strategies to provide safe learning, living and work environments and accommodate students who, by reason of a protected ground, have been impacted by operational changes due to COVID-19. It is recommended that the Faculties and Dean of Students review and update its programs and strategies to reasonably accommodate students who cannot or choose not to be vaccinated on protected grounds. Such***

***accommodation programs may apply to student placements whereby the employer requires the student to be vaccinated.***

***Recommendation 15: It is recommended that the university continue to use its existing practices to hold students accountable for compliance with its safety measures including specific safety measures applicable to residence operations.***

## **7. General Public Issues**

Under normal operating conditions, the general public has open access to many of the buildings, outdoor spaces and services on our campuses. Under a general common law duty of care, as well as the *Occupiers' Liability Act*, the university is responsible to take reasonable steps to ensure that visitors will be "reasonably safe in using the premises for the purposes for which the visitor is invited or permitted...to be there" (*Occupiers' Liability Act*, ss. 5 - 6). As such the university has responsibility to provide and maintain the land, building and infrastructure so that it does not endanger the health and safety of other persons. In response to the pandemic and in alignment with public health orders, the university has restricted public access to the majority of its buildings.

In the case of infrastructure that is normally open to the public, such as theatres, meeting space, athletic facilities or libraries, the university will be faced with a situation whereby some of the public accessing these facilities will be vaccinated while others will not. Through this transition, the university will need to balance the academic and operational needs of units such as KSR and fine arts with the management of the university community's and the public's health and safety. The university will have the responsibility to put reasonable practices in place to protect the university community's and the public's health and safety while using and accessing university grounds and facilities.

***Recommendation 16: It is recommended, to protect the health and safety of the campus population and the public, that the university continue to limit the public's access to university facilities and grounds with the exception of facilities such as libraries, live performance venues and athletic facilities based on public health measures and compliance with the university's Safety Measures General Directives. Interim procedures should be developed/maintained to address large gatherings and student groups during the fall term and/or until further guidance is provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.***

## **8. Campus Health and Safety**

Under the pandemic, the university has developed comprehensive health and safety measures as outlined in its Safety Measures General Directives. These public health measures continue to be updated as research, provincial government public health measures and mandates are modified.

Although vaccinations are slowly being rolled out, at this time, the general advice from health professionals is that health and safety measures such as mask wearing, distancing, hand washing and other public health measures will need to continue for the foreseeable future regardless of whether individuals are vaccinated or not. Only once a large percentage of the population is vaccinated and public health orders are discontinued, will the university be able to consider reducing or eliminating COVID-19 related health and safety measures. Regarding the issue of herd immunity thresholds, the university must rely on the provincial government and the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) to determine whether or not the university community has reached such a threshold that would enable it to reassess its SMGD. As such, the university will have to continually monitor and adjust its decisions regarding in-person instruction, levels of campus research activity, working from home requirements, building operations and visitors to campus. The university will also have to address student group activity, special, social, entertainment and athletic events and other large scale gatherings both on and off-campus, throughout the vaccination rollout and the Fall and Winter terms

One issue of immediate concern to the university is the prioritization of access to the COVID-19 vaccines by the university's health sciences students undertaking clinical placements and university employees who provide high risk services (i.e. utility operations, protective services and undertaking COVID-19 research). Currently these groups of individuals are not being prioritized for vaccination. Students on clinical placements are of particular concern as many of them may spend more time working directly with COVID-19 positive patients versus regular health care workers and therefore should be prioritized for vaccination.

The treatment of university contractors relative to COVID-19 vaccinations is in many ways similar to that of the university's approach to employees, students and the public. Within university vendor contracts, there is no specific language related to health practices such as vaccinations, however there is the requirement that all third party vendors comply with the university's policies and procedures. Other than in certain high risk working contexts and areas of activity, there is nothing currently in place that would allow the university to require vendors to be vaccinated or to provide proof of immunization.

***Recommendation 17: Until further research is completed on COVID-19, the long-term efficacy of the vaccinations, the impact of herd immunity and until the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health revises public health orders, it is recommended that the university maintain and revise, as required, its Safety Measures General Directives to include a section on vaccinations in addition to the ongoing use of masks, physical distancing and other public health measures through at least the Fall Term 2021.***

***Recommendation 18: It is recommended that the university, in response to changing public health orders and in cooperation with Alberta Health Services, develop review and approval processes for on and off campus student groups and large scale gatherings.***

**Recommendation 19: It is recommended that the university continue to advocate with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, the prioritization of all students engaged in**

practicums associated with teaching and health service delivery and university high risk service workers/COVID-19 researchers for receipt of the vaccine. The university further encourages Alberta Health to consider the prioritization of all university faculty and staff to facilitate the university's ability to maximize the return to in-person instruction.

***Recommendation 20: Other than in high risk working contexts and areas of activity, it is recommended at this time that the university does not mandate that contractors receive a COVID-19 vaccination or require proof of immunization as a condition of entry into the working environment.***

## **9. Travel and Field Activities**

Due to current restrictions, all international travel has been suspended and field research activities significantly constrained. These too will need to be monitored on an ongoing basis. Any modifications to current university international travel and field activity restrictions will be subject to a range of factors and will be heavily influenced by foreign government travel policies, the global availability of vaccines, infection rates in different geographic regions and Government of Canada restrictions on re-entering the country.

***Recommendation 21: It is recommended that the university continue to restrict foreign travel and limit field research activities until such time as the federal government modifies its international travel advisories and the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health revises public health measures.***

## **10. On Campus Vaccination Clinic**

The university has extensive experience and a proven track record in operating and managing clinics to vaccinate members of the university community. Subject to the provincial government's rollout strategy, the university may have a role to play in providing access to vaccinations. Apart from being convenient for all employees and students, an on-site vaccination clinic may be particularly beneficial for those with limited transportation access. If the university were granted approval to run a COVID-19 vaccination clinic, it would need to work in partnership with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to confirm the community to be served, storage, refrigeration, and coldchain of the vaccine, staffing, access to suitable space, the administration and management of health records, communications, and any agreement that may be required to protect the university against liability. The university has informed the Alberta government of its interest in running an on campus vaccination clinic.

***Recommendation 22: It is recommended that the university continue to work with Alberta Health and partners to assess the feasibility of the university operating an on-campus vaccination clinic.***

## 11. Resumption Plan

As a greater percentage of the population is vaccinated and the requirement for public health measures are reduced, the university will need to develop a resumption plan that will guide the university toward a return to normal operations. In doing so, the plan must leverage the best practices that were implemented during the pandemic that should continue on an ongoing basis. The resumption plan must also address such things as the ramping up of in-person classes, labs and research activity, special orientations for students returning to campus, holding special in-person convocation exercises for the 2020 and 2021 graduating classes, the gradual return to work for most employees, welcoming vendors back to our retail operations, holding other special events that may have been cancelled during the pandemic and determining what if any safety measures may be required on an ongoing basis. This will need to be supported by a detailed timeline and communications strategy.

***Recommendation 23: That the Planning Oversight Committee assume responsibility for developing a resumption and supporting communication plan that will guide the university in its return to normal operations.***

## 12. Communications

Timely, reliable, and accurate information distribution to the university community and university stakeholders has been critical throughout the university's response to the pandemic. Effective and efficient communications will be equally critical, as the vaccinations become more readily available, impacting university operations and community expectations.

With any communication strategy university leaders, managers and information specialists will need to carefully consider their various audiences. As in the past, and in line with current health service and wellness information to the U of A community, the university should continue to rely on expert and official information from public health and travel authorities, including the Government of Canada, the provincial government, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health Services. Key messages will need to focus on such things as the benefits of being vaccinated, the ongoing need for health and safety measures, evolving changes to university operations and how employees, students and individuals, who may be highly vulnerable and who are not vaccinated, will be supported and accommodated. There may also be circumstances where a third party using university facilities, requires their participants to be vaccinated. As this requirement would fall outside the university, it would be the third party's responsibility to communicate this requirement. These messages will need to be targeted at several audiences including employees, prospective students, international students, domestic students, students living in residence, parents of students, contractors and visitors to our campuses. Additional information related to return to normal conditions, timelines and end points would be helpful to support the change management aspects of this communication strategy.

***Recommendation 24: It is recommended that the university, and its managers, support***

***the above recommendations by amplifying vaccine rollout information available through public health authorities and clearly communicating:***

- ***the university's support of vaccine use in COVID-19 response,***
- ***vaccine availability on or in proximity to U of A campuses,***
- ***any impacts to university operations as vaccinations are made available,***  
***and,***
- ***how employees, students and visitors can be accommodated as needed.***

### **13. Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic, the emergence of new variants, related public health measures, the availability of vaccines and ongoing research on all aspects of the pandemic are continually evolving. The recommendations in this report were made at a point in time, based on the available credible information. As the pandemic and availability to vaccines evolves, more research is undertaken and more information becomes available, the university will need to review and amend these recommendations accordingly.

This report was prepared by the Vaccination Working Group under the direction of the university's Public Health Response Team. Members of the Vaccination Working Group included Philip Stack, Marj Cayford, Andrew Cooper, Kevin Friese and Jax Oltean