

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>University Budget</b>	
<p>1. Can anyone respond as to how many faculty have departed (finding better offers in other provinces) due to the current budget crisis? How will these losses impact our profile?</p>	<p><i>We don't have the exact numbers relative to those who have departed. What we do have is the fact that the retention of faculty is going to remain a challenge for us, relative to increasing our reputation and the fact that some of the big universities are targeting some of our talented academic members. We've recently lost at least two of our prominent researchers to another university, and it wasn't due to a lack of effort in creating an environment that encourages our faculty members to remain here. Because of the increase in our reputation, we will be having others knocking on the doors of our talented researchers, and we do everything we can to keep them here. This is something that all universities are pushing hard on the government about, that the rest of the country is targeting Alberta to recruit highly qualified faculty members and administrators, because the rest of the country knows about the fiscal challenges faced by Alberta institutions. The government needs to understand that the more they cut funding for Alberta institutions, the more challenging it will be to retain the excellence that Alberta universities have become known for.</i></p>
<p>2. What are the expected tuition increases to each student group? (international undergrads/grads, local undergrads/grads)</p>	<p><i>We don't have an answer to that question yet, because we have to consult with students. For example, last year we had increases for undergraduates, but no increases for graduate students. We look at the market, our budget, and our budget assumptions. We will likely have tuition increases next year, at least for undergraduates, just because of our budget situation and the reductions that we have to cope with. In terms of the specifics, though, we can't answer that question right now.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>Student Learning and Supports</b>	
<p>3. Having Student Services ready for September means we will need the Post-secondary Institutions (PSI) Guidelines by mid July at the latest... do you think that will happen?</p>	<p><i>COPPOA [Council of Post-Secondary Presidents of Alberta] has drafted the guidelines and it is currently being reviewed by Alberta Health Services. The Deputy Minister anticipates having these approved by the end of June or early July. So, we're optimistic that we will meet the mid July timeline. If there's a delay, we would likely develop the primer specific for the University of Lethbridge along with health leaders to move it forward.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>Student Learning and Supports</b>	
<p>4. With respect to the new normal, there is uncertainty in the job market especially for recent and soon to be graduates, is Uleth going to support students after they graduated during their transition period?</p>	<p><i>Bringing together all of our supports for students relative to jobs, work integrated learning, and employment is an intentional set of activities that will ensure that students are supported as they move through their education and past their education. The extent to which we provide services past graduation is an interesting question. We see a different employment landscape at this time, that will likely continue to be more challenging than in recent years. We already provide some support to alumni. Even the “My Experience Transcript” could be a form of support. CareerBridge and Alumni Services are available beyond graduation. The University is also in conversation and working with Provincial and Federal groups in support of initiatives geared towards new graduate employment. Additionally, the University is hosting a Career Fair in September, which is open to students and recent graduates.</i></p>
<p>5. To better enrollment, can we explore options where students and families have unique Uleth creative payment plans to accommodate students with cash flow challenges?</p>	<p><i>We have and always will listen to students and come up with creative solutions in regard to payment plans. Please do not suffer alone if you have concerns. One of our budget values is “access to education.” If there are opportunities for some sort of payment plan, or if there are grants that are coming late, we’re willing to work with every student. Please have the student call Financial Services or Student Affairs if there are concerns and we’ll see what we can do for the student.</i></p>

<b>Questions</b> <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	<b>Answers</b>
<b>Student Learning and Supports</b>	
<p>6. Can you comment on how we are looking with respect to student enrolment for the fall? Also, can you comment on the uptake of students and staff entering the 'Worth a shot' contests?</p>	<p><i>Regarding vaccination campaigns, in the student campaign we currently have over 2,800 entrants. That's more than 30% of the student body at this point in time. We're going to promote that campaign again after the long weekend, and the Students' Union is planning to join in the promotion. More than 65% of staff and faculty have entered the contest already. So, there's great take-up on those campaigns, and they're both growing every day.</i></p> <p><i>With regard to enrolment, things are improving, largely due to the work everyone is doing to support students in getting back to courses and accepting offers. On the new student side of things, we have more applicants than we did last fall, which is great. Registrations are still trailing a little bit by 2.3%, down by 178 compared to last year at the same time. The current projection is that we'll have 2% fewer students enrolled relative to our target, so we're still working very hard to encourage new and continuing students to register for courses as soon as possible. Every week we're getting closer to meeting our target, which is predicated on all the efforts in this area.</i></p> <p><i>We're also working on being able to offer vaccinations on campus through the Health Centre, and be able to do some rapid screening in residence, athletics, and some other areas.</i></p>
<p>7. It was mentioned that approximately 10% of the courses will still be online. A few months ago faculty were asked to submit potential courses which could be delivered online. When will faculty be made aware of their delivery model for each course?</p>	<p><i>That information has already been published for students as part of the registration process, so students know what the mode of delivery is for each course. The Deans' offices also have that information for individual courses and can share it with faculty members.</i></p>
<p>8. It's my understanding that School of Graduate Studies (SGS) has postponed the reviews of extensions, should students expect their extensions to be approved?</p>	<p><i>Program extensions can be requested with the submission of a progress and standing report, and continue to be reviewed as they are received. We will do our best to offer continued support to students who have experienced delays in their programs due to COVID-19.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>COVID-19 / Campus Re-opening</b>	
<p>9. I know we're to open in person in the fall, but what will happen if Alberta gets a 4th wave of COVID, especially if it is the highly dangerous delta variant? The reason I asked is that 26 fully vaccinated people in the UK have died of the delta variant. 1 fully-vaccinated person in Calgary has died of it, and another 9 are in hospital.</p>	<p><i>Health and safety is our number one priority. As we move back to campus, we'll be monitoring what goes on, as well as what's happening in the community of Lethbridge and beyond. We'll be governed by what Alberta Health Services and Dr. Hinshaw directs, and if we face a fourth wave, we'll have conversations about how to move forward. At this point, we hope that with vaccinations taking place that this won't occur, but we will be prepared. If a fourth wave occurs, it wouldn't be the first time we've faced this situation, in terms of transitioning to less face-to-face, so we'd potentially have to undertake the same activities we've taken in the past. Of course, though, we're crossing our fingers that the medical experts are correct in that the balance between vaccination and the variant strains of COVID-19 will be managed. We'll hope for the best, but plan for various eventualities.</i></p>
<p>10. My parking pass is scheduled to be renewed on September 1st and I do not have a pass at the moment due to working from home. If we can be on campus in August to prepare for September, can you explain what we will need to do for parking purposes?</p>	<p><i>All employees should have received an email about their parking passes to give instructions, but if not, contact Campus Mobility (<a href="mailto:parking@uleth.ca">parking@uleth.ca</a>). Campus Mobility will have all the necessary instructions in order to accommodate your parking needs for August or September.</i></p>
<p>11. Will the University be requiring a full return of employees 100% of the time, or will there be flexibility for those who can work from home to work say part time in office and part time virtually?</p>	<p><i>President's Executive has communicated to senior leaders and managers that those decisions will be left to employee / supervisor discussions, with some general guidelines to follow, for example operational or service requirements. We would like to encourage on campus participation by employees and students because we believe the vibrancy of our campus is supported by that. But we also want to ensure that our managers and other leaders are working with employees to determine if there are certain opportunities for employees to have a hybrid on / off campus work model.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>COVID-19 / Campus Re-opening</b>	
<p>12. Will the University be maintaining any different standards for masking, social distancing, etc. than what is being/not being enforced by Alberta Health Services (AHS)? Will masks and hand sanitizer still be as readily available as it is now around campus for people who want to use them? Will we still be doing daily health checks? Many people are very worried about returning to campus regardless of what the Kenny gov't/AHS are recommending.</p>	<p><i>We are currently working through these questions. We will likely encourage safety and health practices beyond what AHS will encourage. So, we will be strongly encouraging health practices around hand sanitation on campus. It's unlikely that we'll be requiring masking, but it's quite likely that we'll strongly encourage masking, at least for the first semester. We'll also encourage, as much as possible, people to practice physical distancing when possible. We've heard public health officials say that, coming out of the pandemic, returning to normal, they anticipate and hope that the population will have learned how to be healthier and safer with the precautions we've been practicing over the past months.</i></p>
<p>13. Why such a strong push to return to campus for the Fall 2021? For example as other universities such as Carleton they advertise that "At Carleton University, we are planning for several in-person courses and activities on campus in the fall, but we will also have online options to allow for maximum flexibility for students and staff. Preparations are well underway for a safe return to our beautiful campus in the fall, informed by health and safety expertise and following all public health guidelines. Barring future public health restrictions, we are optimistic for full campus operations with minimal restrictions in winter, 2022" ...</p> <p>"What people can expect ... We are looking to offer as many in-person courses as possible. This means safely transitioning a significant proportion of courses (e.g. sized classes under 60 students) to in-person learning. Also offering a hyflex learning model for some courses, allowing students through the use of hyflex technology and other arrangements ... larger course offered online</p>	<p><i>Across the country, the intent of the majority of the jurisdictions and universities is to be as fully back to campus as possible. Work is being undertaken to look at how best to bring students back safely, and questions around physical distancing in classrooms, etc. We strongly believe, however, that if we can achieve maximum vaccination by the majority of our community, that we will be in a position to be more back to normal. One of the things that's important to recognise is that public health officials have acknowledged that once we're through the most difficult part of the pandemic and we're moving toward a significant number of people with double vaccinations, COVID-19 will remain. So, we're going to have to, as a world and as a community, recognise that and do our best to live within that reality by behaving appropriately from a health practices perspective. At this point in time, deans have made decisions about offering at least 10% of our courses online to provide some flexibility, and we continue to learn and base our decisions on the science and experts in this area, while prioritising health and safety.</i></p> <p><i>Many universities are saying very similar things about their goals to be as in person and on campus as possible, respecting health and safety. We'll continue to have Zoom and other platforms available, and we'll likely continue to be in transition with some hybrid meetings and such where it makes sense. We don't have "hard and fast" rules we're following; we're trying to be on campus as much as possible, but respecting the realities we're facing for the next few months.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>COVID-19 / Campus Re-opening</b>	
<p>14. As you probably have seen, various universities in Manitoba are limiting in person classes to smaller classes. It appears we are not, and so we should not assume that the students will be socially distanced in the classrooms, correct? Nor will they be required to wear masks, correct? Consequently, then, how should we run our classes to keep things safe?</p>	<p><i>(Questions #13, #14, and #15 are combined and have the same answer, above)</i></p>
<p>15. Will the university continue to offer meetings and teachings (for example) to be accessed via zoom or some other remote form? Or, is it the expectation that everyone will be on campus and return fully to in-person meetings and learning? Will the university ensure things (meetings, lectures, etc.) are fully “accessible” whether on campus or not?</p>	
<p>16. We need to wait for more details on those cases, but for example, in the UK while just 26 people died after their second dose, more than 30.6 million have had doses and most are safe. We need to ensure that we continue wearing masks, and follow the advice from healthcare professionals until the numbers of cases are significantly down across the country and outside.</p> <p><a href="https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/?_ga=2.97525977.754483150.1624008312-2068559630.1612166107">https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/?_ga=2.97525977.754483150.1624008312-2068559630.1612166107</a></p>	<p><i>Thank you for this information!</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>COVID-19 / Campus Re-opening</b>	
<p>17. For those planning events for the fall. When will we find out guidelines that we need to follow, as planning is already taking place?</p>	<p><i>Specific guidelines will be, in part, in the document that COPPOA has developed in collaboration with the government based on the British Columbia document. We're in the process of establishing more specific guidelines around events. We've been trying to keep track of what's going on, and trying to support bringing safe events to campus. Over the last year we've created a virtual event toolkit to try to support people in understanding their options around hosting events. We've had some great success in hosting virtual events. We're hoping to have updated guidelines available shortly, including a checklist as soon as we know a bit more about what restrictions may be in place. We're hoping to be able to register upcoming events so that we can reach out to those planners to ensure that any regulations in place are being followed to ensure a successful event.</i></p>
<p>18. Considering the high likelihood of having a hybrid model for at least another semester, will the university be more flexible with the support afforded to its staff when trying to work from home. Currently, we cannot use our professional development fund for home offices supplies, despite working from home for over a year. It is likely that we will now need two offices.</p>	<p><i>Professional supplement can be used for office supplies, including stationary, computers, printers, and internet connections. Professional supplement cannot be used for furniture, though, because it's a personal expense according to Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) guidelines. So, we have to be careful about preserving the professional supplement program, as CRA auditors review our Professional Supplement program periodically; since it's supposed to be used for work related expenditures, we have to ensure that it's used in accordance with CRA guidelines, which clearly disallow furniture purchases to be claimed.</i></p> <p><i>We're currently having conversations on campus regarding how we allow people to have flexibility and work at home as well as at the office. The question is whether we provide computers in the office as well as at home, or do we provide laptops that can be moved between locations. Laptops are more expensive, but it may be necessary. It will be up to supervisors to work with their employees to determine the model that works best for their situations. We do want people on campus as much as possible to ensure the vibrancy of campus, but we also want to recognise that as we've come through COVID-19, we've determined that there are flexible ways to work, and we want to ensure that, going forward, we support those levels of flexibility.</i></p>

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
<b>COVID-19 / Campus Re-opening</b>	
<p>19. Given that there are several articles speaking to the benefits of a blended Work From Home/Virtual approach to professional settings or the need for reduced work weeks to support the mental health of employees, are there plans to provide mental health resources to faculty/staff? What are the plans to support ALL groups on campus as we transition back?</p>	<p><i>We do have support services for faculty and staff through the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP), as well as other programs. We've had this for many years, including resources on campus as well as an external agency that can provide assistance to people. It can be difficult for people to know where they can get help, so please contact Human Resources, Student Affairs (for students), or even the President's Office if you need direction on where to go for help. We've communicated directly with our leaders and supervisors about the importance of working closely with faculty and staff to support them as we all work through challenging situations. We know it will be a challenging transition for many different reasons as we return to campus, and we want to ensure we're supporting the entire community. For students, in particular, we've also negotiated an arrangement with Alberta Health Services to add four positions to the Health Centre that are focused on mental health and addictions. Those new positions will be in place for the fall, as we anticipate an increase in demand. The counselling team remains available in Anderson Hall.</i></p>
<p>20. It is my understanding that at this time Lethbridge College is telling their teaching staff that they are not to conduct student meetings in their offices due to the close proximity involved of doing so. They are encouraged to have these types of meetings online or after class. Do we think such restrictions need to be in place?</p>	<p><i>We don't have an answer to that specific question yet, although it has been discussed at the planning committee and various working groups. What we've learned is that online appointments with students is turning out to be a better way to connect with them. We've heard from a number of faculty that have said online office hours have resulted in more students reaching out for support. So, this may be a strength and benefit that emerges from the COVID-19 experience that carries forward to make appointments more accessible by holding them online. Students seem to feel less intimidated by this method, and it may make it easier for them to balance their academic demands with other things in their lives. We've also learned that our online student mental health supports have had significant uptake, and we intend to continue those kinds of supports. We've learned that face-to-face is important as well, and that will continue, but some students have accessed services because they're online. COVID-19 has taught us things about how technology can be helpful, and we'll continue to build on that. For staff, we'll leave it up to supervisors, and there will be opportunities for blended service delivery.</i></p>