

The Numbers are Looking Good

Editorial

October 2021 (Vol. 53, No. 5)

Robert Dawson (Saint-Mary's University)

Editor-in-Chief



In the September issue, I wrote that “most Canadian universities are not requiring vaccination for faculty or students who want to be on campus in the fall.” I’m glad to say that that line was out of date by the time the issue hit the stands. Many universities across the country have followed Seneca College’s example and moved to a robust vaccine mandate, often well beyond anything required by provincial governments. In some cases, university administrations took the lead; just as often, lobbying by student unions and faculty unions seems to have been the trigger.

Saint Mary’s University (and this seems to be a fairly common story) is now requiring vaccination, with twice-weekly testing as the only alternative. I don’t want to minimize the difficulty of implementing such policies. Universities have had, at short notice, to interface with many countries’ disparate vaccination systems, and to set up timelines that (on the one hand) are fair to all and (on the other hand) will protect everybody. Vaccinations are being provided on campus for those still needing them; hundreds of individuals

appear to have taken advantage of this.



Is it working? The university has set up a check-in system, and are publicly tracking vaccination numbers on campus. Yesterday, a goodly 93% of the people on campus were fully vaccinated; with numbers like these, we can have confidence that the term will proceed with some semblance of normality for most of us. Not everybody is so lucky; we have some foreign students who have been unable to travel, who will have to take what courses they can online. But, for a large majority of students, this year should be far more normal. And news coverage suggests that we’re not atypical: that most Canadian universities are taking vaccination and other pandemic precautions seriously.

I’m writing this in September. When you read it, you will know whether I have been overoptimistic or not. But, right now — the numbers are looking good for many universities.