

Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) Media Release re: Fall Semester 2020

Monday, May 11, 2020

HALIFAX, NS – University leadership teams across the region are cautiously optimistic about the resumption of institutional operations for the fall semester but only with the approval of Public Health officials.

M. Allister Surette, Recteur, Université Sainte-Anne, Church Point, NS, and Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU), said the paramount priority for university leaders is taking all necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of returning and incoming first-year students, faculty and staff in September.

“Like all Canadians, organizations and institutions, our universities have managed to get through the past seven weeks by operating strictly within the parameters of public health directives.”

He added that, “Universities have a ‘duty of care’ to all members of the campus community, a responsibility our leadership teams take very seriously. Presidents are in regular conversation with Boards of Governors, faculty, staff and student representatives, government officials and community leaders. Despite uncertainty about September, our institutions are working toward fulfilling the critical role they play in helping students achieve their academic and life goals.”

M. Surette said “in all likelihood, certain aspects of traditional campus activities – classroom teaching, research activities, residence living, gatherings – will be different than in the past to ensure health risks are minimized” and he added, “it is quite likely that some academic programs [or aspects of programs] will be delivered virtually”

AAU member universities wish to reassure returning students and incoming first-year students and their families, that adherence to the guidance of Public Health officials will drive all institutional decision-making, especially concerning ‘physical distancing’ practices and protocols.

Atlantic Canada’s universities have an international and national reputation for high-quality education, a unique student experience and, for being friendly and welcoming.

M. Surette concluded with a message to those students about to graduate from grade 12 and their parents: “All necessary precautions will be taken to protect everyone’s health, wellness and safety on campus. Do not let the current level of uncertainty dissuade you from pursuing a post-secondary education credential. Your active pursuit of higher education and related student experience is now more important than ever. In these uncertain and challenging times, higher education will make a positive difference in your life, your future career and the future of our region and our country.”

The Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) represents the interests of universities across the region, ensuring public visibility for the important role they play in preparing future leaders of our communities, in path-breaking research and innovation, and in contributing to the economic, cultural and social prosperity of life in Atlantic Canada.

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