

Dear colleagues,

Thank you, everyone, for your messages and best wishes as I stepped into the position of Vice President and Principal on July 1. This is just the beginning of my five-year journey, and I feel honoured and privileged to have this opportunity – with each one of you – to make a difference at UTM.

There is no doubt that this first year will be challenging, given the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. On Saturday, I and other members of the UTM executive team received a petition from members of our community, asking for mandatory masking in areas of the campus. Some of you will have seen a CBC news story this morning in which colleagues shared their views on this matter and others related to health and safety at UTM. Meantime, many faculty, staff, and students have reached out to me individually to let me know their own concerns.

Let me start by offering my thanks to all of you who have taken the time to organize and communicate with me and the UTM executive team. We hear your concerns, and we are grateful for your commitment to UTM and your ideas about how we can best support your work.

I also want to offer thanks to those at UTM who have worked so diligently on pandemic-related issues for months now—to custodial staff and others from Facilities who, even at the pandemic's peak, kept our campus operational and safe; to the Research and Dean's Office administrators and staff who are developing protocols for the Fall; to colleagues in the Library, Student Services, and the Registrar's Office helping meet prospective, new, and existing students' needs.

Their goal is UTM's goal: a safe and gradual return to campus. We are taking careful steps to protect our community and to follow the guidance of public health authorities and experts. Earlier today, the University distributed a memo that explains tricampus plans for the use and distribution of non-medical masks for public places on campus. (Note that UTM awaits Peel's bylaw on mandatory masks, in case we need to make any adjustments at our campus to comply with it.)

Along with the rest of UTM's executive team, I will remain focused on putting in place measures like these to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the vulnerable. And I will also be focused on listening to your concerns, and communicating important information to you a timely manner.

We want you to be able to engage in research, teach, and make UTM thrive in a healthy and safe environment. Thank you again – and I look forward to working with you all to make the 2020-21 year a success.

Best wishes,

Alex Gillespie
Vice President & Principal