

# CENTENNIAL COLLEGE STUDENT ASSOCIATION INC.

## FULL BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, August 17, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

### MINUTES

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Present:	T. Singh	-	President
	K. Nixon	-	Vice President, Ashtonbee Campus
	P. Verma	-	Vice President, Morningside Campus
	T. Shah	-	Vice President, Progress Campus
	C. Dzib	-	Vice President, Story Arts Centre
	C. Cruz	-	Vice President, Bombardier Centre
	P. Kirlik	-	Executive Director/CEO
Staff:	D. Ip Yam	-	Ex-Officio Member/Dean of Students
	R. Ezekiel	-	Dir. of Equitable Learning, Health & Wellness
	A. Mushtaq	-	Research & Advocacy Coordinator
	Lisa Pargetter	-	Recording Secretary, MinuteTakers Inc.

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*Motions will include the count of votes for, against and abstentions. The count will be shown as follows: (FOR – AGAINST – ABSTAINED).*

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Notice having been given and there being a quorum present, the President called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. and presided as Chair.

2. **CENTENNIAL COLLEGE IMMUNIZATION WORKING GROUP**

David Ip Yam and Rick Ezekiel were welcomed to the meeting to discuss the College's vaccine policy and procedures for residence and varsity development, and the need for a College-wide vaccine policy and procedure. The Immunization Working Group is meeting with the staff and faculty unions and the CCSAI to discuss the policy. Highlights are noted as follows:

- (a) *Immunization Working Group Context* – R. Ezekiel thanked everyone for attending this last-minute meeting and provided information on the Immunization Working Group that was established to make a recommendation on the institutional approach. Ontario finds itself in a fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is mainly driven by the Delta variant. Great headway is being seen in the vaccination of individuals aged 18 and older. Even with the high vaccination rates, there is still significant spread that is largely being driven by unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people. The College is looking at supporting the learning and well-being of students and staff while being mindful of the risks associated with returning to campus. The College is also looking into the health tools that can be put in place on campus.
  - (b) *Policy and Procedures* – Centennial is looking at implementing a College-wide vaccine policy. The College has been reviewing all other institutions' policies that have been released. The mandate of the Working Group was initially to provide a vaccine policy for varsity athletes and students in residence and to then assess whether an institution-wide policy is required; the recommendation is to develop an institution-level policy. The early recommendation will be to request proof of vaccination for those returning to campus in the fall, with appropriate exemptions in place. Unvaccinated individuals will have to follow other risk mitigation strategies, such as rapid testing twice per week, screening and aligning with the recently updated Provincial isolation recommendations. The policy and procedures will be drafted and approved by the College's Executive Committee. Relevant communication will be released to students and staff.
- 2.1 **Discussion** – T. Singh opened the floor for questions, comments or concerns.
- (a) *Vaccine Status Discrimination* – C. Dzib noted concern regarding how to prevent individuals being discriminated against because of vaccine status. R. Ezekiel clarified that the Working Group has made sure to build in grace periods for those who are not yet vaccinated or fully vaccinated and will provide access to testing and vaccine clinics to ensure that vaccines are accessible to all individuals at no cost.

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- (a...) Individual vaccine status, test results and approval for an individual to enter the campus will be kept confidential. The grace period between vaccines will also be captured within the policy.
- (b) *Fear on Campus* – C. Dzib stated that students may be afraid to be in contact with other individuals who are not vaccinated. It was suggested that the Working Group promote as much harmony within the campuses as possible. R. Ezekiel agreed with C. Dzib and noted that the anxiety that some individuals feel comes from a fair place, but communication will be very important.
- (c) *Accessible Vaccines* – K. Nixon queried what more can be done to make vaccines even more accessible. She suggested setting up pop-up clinics, providing TTC fare to attend campus to get vaccinated or, if possible, for the College to assist in setting up clinics in neighbourhoods where the student population resides. R. Ezekiel noted that the Working Group is communicating with the Ministry of Health to see if it is possible to schedule pop-up clinics at the campuses or to have a mobile clinic to attend each campus.
- (d) *Vaccine Hesitancy* – T. Shah pondered what strategies can be used to develop confidence in the vaccine and combat vaccine hesitancy, fear of the vaccine, side-effects, etc. R. Ezekiel stated that there is data showing that vaccine hesitancy results from concerns about how the vaccine works and the safety of the vaccine. Adverse effects are always heard about in the media, but the safety of the vaccine is not seen. Ontario is now breaking down case numbers and showing the proportion of individuals unvaccinated, partially vaccinated and fully vaccinated. This data is also tracked for hospitalizations and those in the ICU. This information will be communicated, while also promoting the benefits and social impacts of the vaccine. Community-based interventions may also be needed. It was also suggested that the College engage trusted medical professionals to help answer any questions.
- (e) *Exemptions* – P. Verma noted concern with the types of exemptions that are included and queried if individuals can access programs on campus. R. Ezekiel advised that the exemptions have not been fully confirmed. For those who are not vaccinated, the College will be offering good information on the vaccine and providing resources students can speak with regarding the vaccines, and supporting campuses through regular screening and testing, etc. P. Verma inquired whether a person having concerns regarding the vaccine is included as one of the exemptions. R. Ezekiel stated that there are many reasons why someone is hesitant to get vaccinated. This is being looked at through conversations with CCSAI and the staff and faculty unions. There may be many reasons for exemption, such as religious and creed reasons.
- (f) *Vaccination Grace Period* – T. Shah questioned what unvaccinated students can expect with respect to the grace period.

- (f...) R. Ezekiel stated that it is important to not leave students in limbo regarding vaccine status. T. Shah pointed out that there are a lot of students who are not strongly for or against the vaccine, but there is a certain group who are very hesitant and concerned about having a mandate. It was inquired whether students who have a very strong hesitancy will these have to get the vaccine or be exempted. R. Ezekiel clarified that if students want to access the College without any extra screening responsibilities, the grace period will allow them to get vaccinated, ask questions, etc. to ensure that they are aware of their options. Some students may decide not to get vaccinated. It is expected that there will be a lower number of students who are very hesitant and it is expected that the College will be able to work with these individuals. This will be captured within the exemption and accommodation policy.
- (g) *Privacy* – T. Singh questioned if the College will be violating individuals' privacy by collecting vaccine status information. R. Ezekiel confirmed that a small group of staff at the College will have this information; these staff members will work with unvaccinated students on how to obtain tests, submit results, etc. However, those staff who impact a student's learning or their access to campus will not have access to this private information.
- (h) *Hesitancy in Marginalized Communities* – C. Cruz mentioned some communities may be hesitant because of past mistreatment within the healthcare industry and questioned how to make members of these communities feel safe and fairly treated. R. Ezekiel stated that it is important to think about students in all communities who may feel marginalized within medical care or by organizational-imposed policies. Two ways to help combat this hesitancy is through community-based efforts to provide trusted voices for information, and the approach the College takes with communication. The College is working with Scarborough Health Network to assist and to prepare acceptable exemptions within the policy.
- (i) *Communication Plan* – T. Shah and K. Nixon are working with the College and the Scarborough Health Network on the communication plan for the 18-29-year-olds. P. Kirlik inquired how, operationally, this will happen and how contractors will be addressed and given access the College. The government has also been in touch to have a polling station at Progress Campus.
- (j) *Comparison Policies* – A. Mushtaq inquired regarding the comparison to other GTA college policies and exemptions. R. Ezekiel noted that the Working Group is reviewing all other College policies as they are announced. They are reviewing whether it is it an attestation or a proof of vaccination approach, and looking at exemption policies and flexibility of the exemptions. The Working Group is looking at what is good within each of these policies and then speaking with the CCSAI and other groups within the College to adapt this information to develop Centennial's policy.

- (k) *Mental Health and Testing* – C. Dzib suggested giving some consideration to mental health supports for students, and inquired how testing can be made accessible to students and employees. R. Ezekiel noted that mental health and anxiety will be addressed. There will be mental health concerns as people begin socializing and attending school in person again. A scoping project is underway to determine how testing will take place. This will need to be accessible at each campus. The Working Group is looking at providing self-administered rapid antigen tests twice per week. The Working Group is looking into the tracking system that will be used for testing, screening, etc. at each campus.
- (l) *Communication Challenges* – T. Shah noted concern regarding the short timeline. There are limited communications that are interesting, easy to read, etc., and those who are not confident in the information being provided by the College may look for information elsewhere. R. Ezekiel stated that having clear and reliable information will be difficult. The Working Group will attempt to create avenues at the College for group and individualized advice with credible information. It is important to promote the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine, social behaviour, and indicate how students can connect with health care professionals or speak about concerns. ***Action: R. Ezekiel will connect with the CCSAI before the vaccination policy is announced and finalized.***
- (m) *Concerns* – T. Singh thanked everyone for their comments and noted confidence in the Working Group's intention to promote health and safety, but expressed concern regarding the College's approach. It was pointed out that the vaccine has not been approved for general use, only for emergency use; it was inquired who will be liable if something happens, if Health Canada has not approved the vaccine for general use. Concern was expressed that language of 'required' or 'mandated' may overshadow the rights of individuals. Concern was also expressed that making the vaccine mandatory might make hesitant people less likely to get the vaccine. R. Ezekiel noted that if a vaccine is not received, other mitigation strategies will be in place. Public health organizations have gone through rigorous vaccine testing and there is global data to show that the vaccine is working and there are a relatively low number of adverse effects. The College is asking for students to return to school and work, and wants to promote the safety of everyone in the school while supporting the rights of all individuals.
- (n) *Mandatory Vaccines* – T. Singh queried how the College can mandate the vaccine when the federal government and Health Canada have not approved it for general use. R. Ezekiel stated that the emergency use authorization is in place by Health Canada, and vaccines are approved for use in Canada and other countries. The College will rely on scientific and health experts that vaccines are safe for use. T. Singh pointed out that the vaccine is not mandatory for public spaces and the College is a public space. R. Ezekiel stated that the College is looking at vaccines versus testing. If the vaccine requirement is in place, a significant number of people with COVID-19 will be reduced.

- (n...) The vaccine requirement is more effective in reducing the amount of virus on campus and reduces the likelihood of transmission. The epidemiology will continue to shift and the College will rely on the science and available data from the Can COVID Group and Ontario Science Table. The Working Group is communicating with Toronto Public Health before the policy is moved forward. Active guidance is being followed by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer. The right balance will have to be struck between looking at the science and the needs of the student population. R. Ezekiel is confident that a high level of vaccinations on campus will help manage community safety.
- (o) *Mandatory Testing* – T. Singh stated that eliminating testing for vaccinated people is a risk as vaccinated people can still get sick and transmit the virus to others. It was suggested that testing should be mandatory.
- (p) *Policy Language* – T. Singh noted concern with the use of the words ‘requirement’ or ‘mandatory’ because there will be exemptions to the policy. T. Singh suggested the use of the word ‘encourage’ rather than ‘mandated’ or ‘mandatory’. The College should focus on educating students and staff.
- (q) *Online Education* – K. Nixon stated that people should be able to access education without health barriers, as some students live with other family members who are at a greater risk of becoming ill. It was queried if online learning could be made available to students. R. Ezekiel stated that the College is looking at a mandate and will look at a proof of vaccination requirement to return to campus to prevent community transmission, and how to provide support for those who cannot be vaccinated through other accommodations.
- (r) *College Community* – C. Dzib feels it is important to look at the safety of the community as a whole and to promote safety on campus. It was suggested that the data and vaccine information be compiled in one place where students and employees can access all the documents and data easily. R. Ezekiel suggested that a townhall meeting be organized that is open to the community with health experts making presentations.

## 2.2 Next Steps

- (a) *Next Steps* – R. Ezekiel and D. Ip Yam are preparing an institutional communication that will be released this week to advise the community that a policy will be in place and available shortly. The Immunization Working Group will plan to have a second meeting with the CCSAI to review the policy, procedures and communication plan. D. Ip Yam thanked the Board for their thoughtful considerations. It was noted that the Immunization Education Group was created before the Working Group, and these two groups will be connected.

*K. Nixon departed at 3:29 p.m.*

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- (b) *Community Transmission* – K. Nixon noted (in the Zoom chat) that it would be terrible for Centennial to be a spreader of the virus. T. Singh stated that there are many factors and the virus can be spread through public transport, in restaurants, at gas stations, etc. T. Singh suggested that when the policy is created, the equity lens be taken into consideration.
- (c) *Meeting Confidentiality* – R. Ezekiel and D. Ip Yam requested that the meeting discussion remain confidential until the institutional communication is released.

3. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The CCSAI Board of Directors and the Immunization Working Group will hold a meeting next week.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was concluded at 3:34 p.m. on Motion duly made and seconded.

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President – T. Singh

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Executive Director/CEO – P. Kirlik