

An Appraisal of the UW Vaccine Mandate by a Former Student and Current Lecturer

March 22nd, 2022

Hello, I wanted to share an overview of what I have witnessed during the past 8 months. This may be of interest to you. My apologies if you are not interested in this content.

I have witnessed firsthand the experiences of many former UW employees and the dire predicaments faced by students due to the vaccine mandate at the University of Waterloo. It was clear from the onset that the University of Waterloo chose to administer the harshest possible implementation of the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of the Province of Ontario. Never did the provincial or federal governments require that such a hard-lined approach be taken with respect to [vaccination requirements of employees or students](#) (min 20:35).

Blue-collar employees were the first to be let go. Custodial and Plant Operations staff members who served the university for decades were dismissed without consideration. Many dismissed employees had made it clear to the administration that they were willing to take antigen/PCR testing indicating they were COVID-negative before entering campus. However, the UW administration was consistently unwilling to work out arrangements to accommodate its students and employees. It became very clear to me early on that UW was losing its finest people. These were people of honour and conviction that lived based on principles and would not be intimidated into making decisions that were strictly against their firmly held personal beliefs.

I have directly spoken to employees who have had to sell their homes of 30 years due to job loss. Employees who were desperate not to have their children learn about their job loss during the holiday season and who were subsequently relying on social assistance to make it through the remainder of the winter.

Reality check: Not every person who works at the university earns a six-figure salary or has a sizable savings on which to fall back. Many employees in their fifties or sixties faced the distressing reality of trying to find a new position of employment when they should have been close to retirement.

Employees have suffered - many have talked about crying every night, unable to believe that their institution would turn on them so coldly and abruptly. They have dedicated decades of their lives to this institution only to have their accommodation requests rejected without explanation and their employment terminated in a matter of weeks following an accommodation rejection notice. Other employees have turned to psychiatric care, mental health support and medical leave due to the stress and anxiety of UW's vaccine mandate. To my knowledge, the vast majority of accommodation requests were rejected, including my own, without explanation or room for the student or employee to further clarify their position. The consistent message received by students and employees has been a do-or-else rejection letter.

There are too many stunning stories to relate in one letter. For example, employees from Print and Retail Services were working hundreds of hours of overtime during the pandemic in order to enable a seamless transition for students from fully in-person to fully online education. These employees recall being the first ones in the parking lot in the mornings of March and April 2020 and the last ones to leave campus after 9:00 pm. They went from heroes of the pandemic to terminated employees due to their vaccination status. They were given no recourse and no room for consideration - an unrelenting approach to vaccine mandates. I have copied some of these stories to the end of this letter. There are so many more. The [damage caused to the lives of UW employees and students](#) has kept me awake at night. I do not know how the administration sleeps.

An undergraduate student's perspective: "The university took the maximum amount of time to respond to me regarding my religious based accommodation request. Finally, when I was told that I was denied accommodation without explanation, I was removed from my UW residence within hours. I could not even gather all of my belongings. I was treated like a criminal and immediately removed from my temporary home and from my classes. I do not wish to return to such a campus. Disgraceful. "

Students have faced depression for not being allowed to return to campus, many having to make life-changing decisions regarding their education. As of January 2022, there were 5000 students registered for Winter 2022 who were deemed vaccine non-compliant by the Registrar's Office. These students were told that they could not continue their Winter term studies because of their non-compliance. No explanations were given for accommodation rejections, only very clear instructions that the individual was not permitted on campus and not permitted to continue their education. These were heartless do-or-die ultimatums, with no possible compromise or consideration of extenuating circumstances.

The university never respected people for having varying views on Covid-19 vaccines. Every individual has a right to refuse medical treatment, however, individual bodily autonomy and humans rights were never considered by this institution. The fact is, people have firmly held principles and beliefs that are in direct opposition to taking Covid-19 vaccines. The university can respect all other personal beliefs and practices, but not a choice to remain Covid vaccine-free. The discussion of why people choose to not vaccinate is beyond the scope of this letter. Further information can be found [here](#).

A graduate student's perspective: "At my university I have been treated worse than a second-class citizen. The threat of not being able to graduate after five years has been a cause of extreme anxiety, not to mention the judgment and derision I have experienced from those with whom I work."

An employee's perspective: "I no longer recognize the people I have worked with for twenty-plus years. They snicker and make derogatory comments against the unvaccinated all the time in my presence."

A parent's perspective: "Throughout the year we attempted to receive accommodation for Covid-19 vaccines from UW. We made many accommodation requests and wrote multiple appeals. We were rejected without reason for my children studying in the faculty of Mathematics. We were very upset at the cruel and inconsiderate treatment we received from the University of Waterloo. If my children had known the cruelty of this academic institution, they would never have chosen UW. With the ultimatums presented to us, unfortunately in the end we had no choice. Directly opposed to their wishes and religious beliefs, my children had to get the Covid-19 vaccine and we will never forgive UW for putting us through this. We will certainly not recommend the University of Waterloo to anyone."

An employee's perspective: "I am livid with the University of Waterloo for forcing me, against my personal beliefs, to take an experimental medical treatment just to keep my job. I have 2 kids and I am the single earning parent, they left me with no choice. Why did they follow only one approach to this. Why did the administration decide to play God with our lives?"

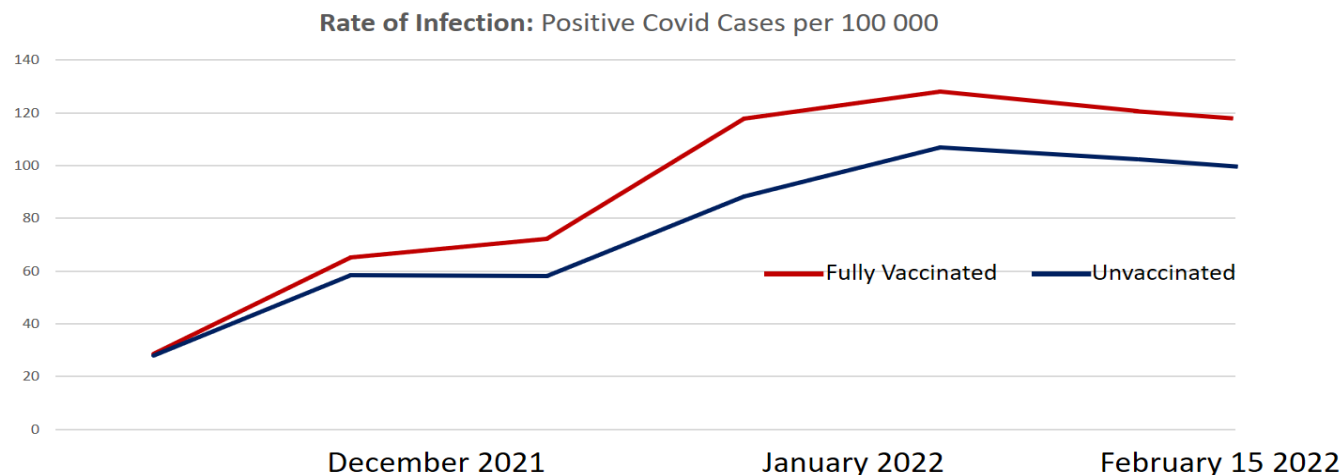
Hearing such personal accounts as I have over the past year, I have often asked myself, *what has lead this institution into such gross intolerance for its own people? How is this acceptable to the faculty and staff that witness such events and do not attempt to support these individuals? Why has the university atmosphere degraded so pitifully over the past year since the onset of vaccine mandates?*

Sadly, I do not have the answers, but I can certainly recognize that this institution has lost its way from the pillars of tolerance, forbearance and inclusion upon which it was founded.

The university is only serving to harm itself. Students and staff are recognizing that they do not wish to be a part of an institution that is cruel and inhumane towards its own people.

What appears to be particularly illogical and unjust is the fact that employees and students have been willing to undergo antigen/PCR testing in place of vaccination since the very beginning. The number of breakthrough infections (vaccinated becoming infected and transmitting infection) was clearly visible in the data from July 2021 to present day. There are also a large number of discrepancies that exist in the hospitalization data. (Please see the reference material in [this](#) document)

During December, January and February, as was predicted and witnessed around the world in highly vaccinated countries, the number of Covid-19 infections spread from the vaccinated was higher than the unvaccinated per 100,000. Please see the attached data from the Government of Ontario website. It became increasingly illogical to punish the unvaccinated for choosing to remain Covid vaccine-free. **An unvaccinated person coming to campus based on negative testing is safer than a fully vaccinated person who is equally capable of transmitting infection.** In fact, that data has consistently indicated vaccinated persons are actually more likely to transmit infection. The rate of infection for the fully vaccinated have been higher since December. I have been monitoring the data very closely and performing calculations for the rates of infection. This was the visible trend from December to March. The province then announced it was no longer closely tracking the spread of infection rates.



- **Specific restrictions on the unvaccinated are unjust. People are being unnecessarily punished.**
- *The average rate of infection (per 100 000) based on daily data obtained from
 - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/data>
 - in December, January and February
 - Full computations [here](#)

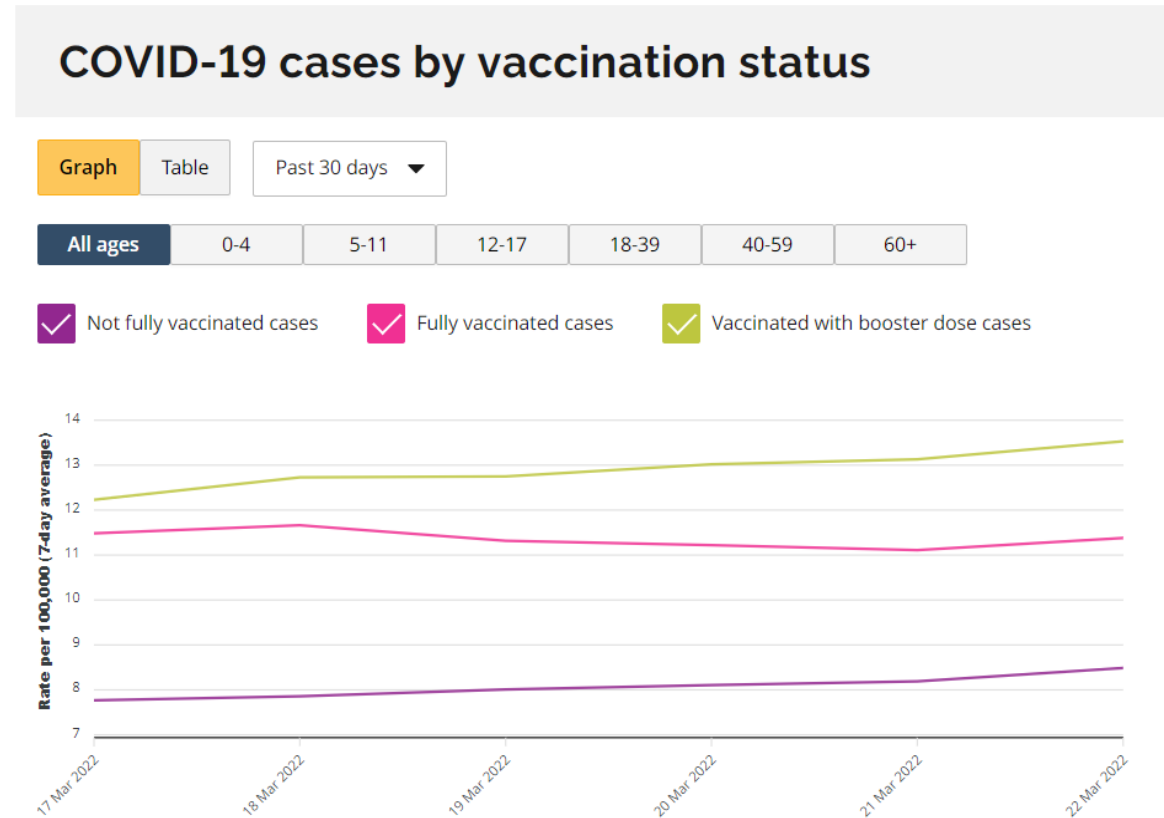
Current Data: (Excerpt from [Vaccine Mandate Appeal](#) sent to UW senior administration)

Daily cases show the number of double vaccinated getting Covid is higher than those who remain vaccine free. The data indicates those with two or more doses of a vaccine are more likely to get the Omicron variant. The rates of infection clearly indicate that the implementation of a forced vaccination mandate is **neither protective nor fair to the unvaccinated**.

Blanket policies against the unvaccinated must be [reconsidered](#) at this time.

- Government of Ontario Website consistently indicated the **unvaccinated have the lowest rates of infection /100 000**

- Jan 01st Covid cases**
 - 14,703 fully vaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 128.19**
 - 2,679 unvaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 106.85**
- Dec 31st Covid cases**
 - 13,436 fully vaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 117.75**
 - 2,278 unvaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 88.26**
- Dec 29th Covid cases**
 - 8,221 fully vaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 72.11**
 - 1,514 unvaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 58.16**
- Dec 24th Covid cases**
 - 7,425 fully vaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 65.22**
 - 1,536 unvaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 58.42**
- Dec 22th Covid cases**
 - 3,243 fully vaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 28.51**
 - 746 unvaccinated ***rate of infection per 100 000: 28.10**
- Dec 21th Covid cases**
 - 2,500 fully vaccinated
 - 673 unvaccinated
- Dec 20th Covid cases**
 - 2,781 fully vaccinated
 - 746 unvaccinated



- The above data clearly indicates that this is indeed **not a pandemic of the unvaccinated**.
- *The average rate of infection (per 100 000) based on daily data
 - Full computations [here](#)
 - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/data>

To this day, however, the UW administration continues to terminate employees' employment and disallow students from coming to campus for being unvaccinated. It has continued a relentless and unyielding approach to punish employees and students. I, along with several other unvaccinated faculty members, wrote numerous letters on behalf of those facing such injustices on this campus, in an effort to get the administration to see the inhumane aspects of their unyielding policies and that there were people on this campus who were suffering greatly. We tried to show the administration the human side of the vaccine mandate and that they were playing with people's lives.

Every Dean, senior administrator and Senator of the university was made aware of the dire circumstances faced by unvaccinated employees and students. [Our letters](#) were never answered – or even acknowledged. Nor were any of our requests for meetings ever accepted. I have included one of my earlier letters to the President's office.

It is also most regrettable that the UW Staff Association and the Faculty Association of UW, whose very purpose is to provide support for **all** staff and faculty, respectively, turned a blind eye to unvaccinated staff and faculty. The FAUW continues to represent and benefit vaccinated faculty across campus. The FAUW has always been in full support of UW's hard-lined approach to vaccine mandates, never once questioning the need for such punitive measures against faculty and students, never recommending a more compassionate and balanced approach be adopted which could support faculty and students of all backgrounds and vaccination preferences.

To my knowledge, however, there are a few exceptional people on this campus who made efforts to support and rectify the injustice faced by unvaccinated employees and students and whom I wish to acknowledge in this letter: 1. a past President of FAUW, 2. individuals from the Office of Equity and Inclusion, 3. a member from the university administration. These individuals attempted to support and rectify the injustice faced by unvaccinated employees and students. Unfortunately, all human rights complaints, numerous grievances and pleas for consideration from unvaccinated employees and students were repeatedly ignored. In the end, our letters and our tireless efforts were weak – in fact, powerless – in comparison to the powers of policy makers at the University of Waterloo. Grievances are completely ignored or delayed for months on end. Given what I have witnessed and learned from numerous staff and students, the grievance process no longer exists at the University of Waterloo.

The University of Waterloo continues to follow a merciless approach to vaccine mandates, one that was clearly not required by the Government of Ontario. Recently, Dr. Kieran Moore, the Province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, announced that vaccine policies are no longer required at academic institutions and should be removed by March 1. The University of Waterloo administration, however, has decided not to change its vaccination policy for the remainder of the Winter term. As has been the case since August 2021, the administration has clearly indicated its absolute unwillingness to give any special consideration to unvaccinated employees or students. Employees that lost their jobs will not be reinstated. Students that were removed from courses following the last drop/add date will not be reimbursed and WD will remain on their transcript. Students that were forced to vacate their residences upon rejection notices will not be reimbursed for residence fees for the Winter term.

The UW administration is now working swiftly to terminate the positions of the remaining vaccine non-compliant faculty members on this campus, including myself, as soon as possible, before the Spring term begins. The administration had to make a decision regarding vaccine mandates for the Spring 2022 term. It seems as if all remaining vaccine non-compliant faculty and employees from Winter 2022 will be dismissed before any changes take effect in May.

I have had the pleasure of becoming well-acquainted with some of the other faculty from UW facing this injustice. In this group I see people of honesty, integrity and decency. I truly believe the university is letting go of its highest-quality people. This will be a loss for the university and a loss for students.

The University of Waterloo recently announced that it will suspend the vaccination requirement on May 1st. However, this announcement came with numerous clauses essentially empowering the administration to reinstate the vaccine mandate whenever it wills, hence turning the vaccination mandate into a more permanent policy. The added clause enables the administration to terminate all remaining vaccine non-compliant individuals with the justification that they may reinstate the mandate at any time.

Let me conclude this letter with some statements of a more personal nature. Up until July 2021, I had many positive experiences at the University of Waterloo. For twenty-five years, UW has been my second home. I was an undergraduate student, a graduate student and, more recently, served as a Lecturer for over ten years. I have a love for teaching and connecting with my students. My School (Computer Science) has always been very good to me, for which I am extremely grateful.

Over the past eight months, however, I have witnessed far too much suffering by UW employees and students as a direct result of the excessive vaccine mandates and their implementation by UW senior administrators. I, along with several other faculty and staff members, struggled in many ways to seek justice for these individuals. [\(Final Appeal Document\)](#). Our efforts, unfortunately, were in vain.

I do not wish to serve an institution that has such a lack of empathy and disregard for the tremendous amount of trauma and distress that it has inflicted on its own people – an institution which trumpets equality and human rights yet tramples the very equality and human rights of hundreds of its employees and thousands of its students. Alternative approaches, both balanced and compromising, which would have avoided this trauma and distress, could have been adopted by the UW administration in consultation with its employees. This, of course, did not happen. The University of Waterloo administration has demonstrated absolutely no respect, let alone sympathy, for the very people who have helped to build this institution. These have indeed been dark and dishonorable days in the history of the University of Waterloo.

I am not worried about my future, however. I know (as do many of the dismissed staff, students and faculty) that we have a Lord watching over us. He is sufficient for us and the Governor of our affairs.

Thank you

Account from a terminated UW staff member:

November 2021

My state of mind was already not in a good place and when I found out that autoimmune disorders were not an acceptable reason for a vaccine exemption at the University of Waterloo. I had a major meltdown. I was literally sick to my stomach for days. My employer was asking me to make the choice of keeping my job of 19 years, or take a new vaccine that could very well hurt me as the flu shot did to my Mom due to her autoimmune disease, which eventually caused her death. All of the pain and trauma from the past 2 years up until now has overwhelmed me. I cannot express the amount of despair I am currently feeling. I have lost all hope when I think about my future. Where will I live? How will I pay my bills? These are questions I never thought I would be asking myself. I finally had a job that I liked, a great boss, I was getting ahead financially for the 1st time in my life and now all of that has been ripped away from me because someone else has decided that my medical issues don't matter and in turn, my life does not matter.

Fast forward to 2022...

Since November 2021 I was denied the continuation of my medical leave (Nov 18) and was put on unpaid leave on November 26th. I had another meltdown. I had applied for EI but had to wait for a decision and it didn't look promising. I had to decide what to do with my apartment.....my life. I had to sell the majority of my furniture and some other belongings and put the rest in storage. I now live 8 hours away from my hometown because I had to move in with my daughter and her boyfriend.

My entire life in my hometown, my health, my independence and a financially stable future has been ripped away from me by my employer when there were numerous other options that could have been agreed upon like continuing to work from home like I had for 18 months already. Or how about accepting my medical condition as a valid exemption. Or how about body autonomy? Since when was any human being allowed to play God with another human beings life against their will? I was supposed to choose between possibly harming myself or keeping my job! THAT is not a choice. THAT is coercion and it's not only unethical but unlawful.

I am disgusted that my employer, that I trusted, that pushed health and well being for all employees, inclusivity and non-discrimination, thinks what they have done was the right thing to do. Not only has UW destroyed many people's lives, they twisted the knife further by saying we are terminated *with cause*, therefore **no severance is to be paid**.

I was a loyal, hardworking employee for 19 years and my performance reviews showed that. What UW did to me and to many others is actually inhumane and unforgiveable. You nor anyone else has the right to make a decision about MY body!

Account from a current UW staff member:

I have been a staff member at UW for over 36 years. My department never closed during Covid and nobody here came down with Covid until after the majority of our staff were vaccinated.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think UW would make the Covid-19 vaccine mandatory because they always preach about Human Rights, Equity & Inclusion. We even have a department for it. Their own policy 33 is all about tolerance and respect for individuals and choice. Now I know that these things only matter if the UW administration agrees with it.

When the mandate came through, I was shocked. UW showed me that they do not care about me at all. For months after, I felt sick to my stomach all the time, I had panic attacks, I was so stressed out that I couldn't sleep anymore, I barely ate and I became depressed. My mind was overwhelmed with the thought of being forced to get a vaccine that has no long-term data, a vaccine that has many serious side effects such as heart attack, stroke, myocarditis, multi-organ inflammatory disease, blood clots, and death!

The university was actually making me choose between my livelihood and my health! I applied for an accommodation and it was rejected. I wonder, who are these people who play God with someone's life, someone that they have never met and don't even know, to reject my decision for not putting a vaccine into my body?

They didn't care that I was on campus the entire time during Covid before the vaccines came out, while they were all enjoying working from home, why do they care so much now that I get vaccinated?

The University administration could have easily drilled down on how best to achieve public health goals while also respecting personal freedom and choice, but they chose not to. Why?

I made the only decision that I could for me and that was to be forced to get the vaccine against my will in order to keep my job so I wouldn't lose my house and end up living on the street.

There are no good job opportunities for someone at my age. I have worked hard my entire life. I have paid into CPP, UW pension, unemployment etc. and UW could take it all away from me just like that because of not getting a vaccine that doesn't keep me from getting or spreading Covid, nor does it have anything to do with my ability to do my job.

Account from a parent of a UW student:

The decision came that his vaccine accommodation was denied. He spoke to someone in charge and he was told nothing in regards to the reason why, what he could have done better to convince, nothing. He asked if a religious person made the assessment, as nobody would ask an individual to go against their religious beliefs or against God Himself. He was told that this information is confidential and cannot be disclosed.

I witnessed myself how he was treated. Pushed off residence like a criminal. He had his last term exam on a Friday and, on Saturday, he was asked to vacate the residence within hours. He could not even get all his belongings. He drove home through a snowstorm, crying and raging.

He was given the option to file grievance. He pointed to the person he spoke to that even if they answer positively to that, it is too late to return to his courses, as the process implied an answer coming weeks after the date of return to in-person classes. The answer he got to that was: “if you believe the process is unfair, you can file a grievance for the grievance process”. My son was stunned to why the person did not recognize that without him pointing it out and why did she not offer to bring it up to her manager instead of asking him to take an extra step. The process was so obviously wrong to him while the person on the other end seemed content with it.

He did not drop his courses as he was hoping to have the answer to his grievance letter by February 7, and continue to come to school or be accepted to move online. None of that happened and he was unenrolled by the university on February 7, so there is no reimbursement and a withdrawal code appears in his transcript.

Kids these days have high expectations of adults, I feel, and we fail greatly as a generation at meeting them. Furthermore, the university answered the last day they were allowed to. They took the whole time they were entitled to “assess” the situation, after which they said they are entitled to 30 extra business days as they did not come to a conclusion. It is sickening. Instead of focusing on education, kids these days have other duties.

My son is outraged to our generation as a whole, how we handle everything. How we allow for such nonsense. How we are not capable of doing better and leave this legacy for them to deal with.

Account from a former UW staff member:

I was a staff member for over 10 years before being terminated for ‘non-compliance’ with the University’s Vaccination Requirement. I am shocked and saddened by UW's dehumanizing actions over the course of the past 6 months. Before this experience, I believed that UW was a place of care, respect, and inclusivity, a place that values the health and well-being of all members of its community. Sadly, it has revealed itself to be the opposite. UW gave the impression they cared about everyone’s health and well-being, but I was discarded because I did not want to do something that was unsafe for my health and well-being. I thought 'how could a decision I made about my health and body equate to me losing my job?', 'how can someone who knows nothing about my body and health situation dictate that I take a medical treatment, and if I don't, I lose my livelihood?' UW appeared to want to work with us as individuals and find ways to reasonably accommodate everyone. However, every attempt I made to continue working at the job I loved was denied with no reasonable explanation.

My accommodation request was rejected with a vague, template-response; my willingness to do testing was not even considered as an option. It was incredibly frustrating and felt arbitrary that I was put on unpaid leave and then terminated when I would have been working remotely anyway. My team continued to work from home, even after I was terminated. Given these circumstances, I have struggled to understand why my 10 year career was put to an end. It is incredibly frustrating to think that these terminations did not have to happen. Not only has UW betrayed its own values and policies, its behavior was unnecessary. **UW chose to take the strictest approach, when universities just down the road chose not to lay off any staff, and other major Canadian universities chose to offer other options, like testing.** Taking away someone’s livelihood when there were other options is callous and infuriating. My heart aches for everyone who has gone through this.

Rate of Infection per 100 000 Calculation:

1. [Population of Ontario](#): 14,789,778
2. [Total Fully Vaccinated in Ontario Jan 1st](#): 11,469,856
3. [Partially Vaccinated in Ontario Jan 1st](#): 812,651
4. [Total Unvaccinated in Ontario Jan 1st](#) (#1 -#2 -#3): 2,507,271
5. [Total Cases Fully Vaccinated Jan 1st](#): 14,703
6. [Total Cases Unvaccinated Jan 1st](#): 2,679
7. Rate of Infection Fully Vaccinated:
 - $14,703 / 11,469,856 \times 100\,000 = 128.19$
8. Rate of Infection Unvaccinated:
 - $2,679 / 2,507,271 \times 100\,000 = 106.85$

Rate of Infection per 100 000 Calculation:

1. [Population of Ontario](#): 14,789,778
2. [Total Fully Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 31st](#): 11,410,550
3. [Partially Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 31st](#): 798,186
4. [Total Unvaccinated in Ontario Dec 31st](#) (#1 -#2 -#3): 2,581,042
5. [Total Cases Fully Vaccinated Dec 31st](#): 13,436
6. [Total Cases Unvaccinated Dec 31st](#): 2,278
7. Rate of Infection Fully Vaccinated:
 - $13,436 / 11,410,550 \times 100\,000 = \mathbf{117.75}$
8. Rate of Infection Unvaccinated:
 - $2,278 / 2,581,042 \times 100\,000 = \mathbf{88.26}$

Rate of Infection per 100 000 Calculation:

1. [Population of Ontario](#): 14,789,778
2. Total Fully Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 29th: 11,400,095
3. [Partially Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 29th](#): 786,307
4. [Total Unvaccinated in Ontario Dec 29th](#) (#1 -#2 -#3): 2,603,376
5. [Total Cases Fully Vaccinated Dec 29th](#): 8221
6. [Total Cases Unvaccinated Dec 29th](#): 1514
7. Rate of Infection Fully Vaccinated:
 - $8221/11,400,095 \times 100\,000 = 72.11$
8. Rate of Infection Unvaccinated:
 - $1514/2,603,376 \times 100\,000 = 58.16$

Rate of Infection per 100 000 Calculation:

1. [Population of Ontario](#): 14,789,778
2. Total Fully Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 24th: **11,383,811**
3. [Partially Vaccinated in Ontario Dec 24th](#): 776,678
4. [Total Unvaccinated in Ontario Dec 24th](#) (#1 -#2 -#3): 2,629,289
5. [Total Cases Fully Vaccinated Dec 24th](#): 7425
6. [Total Cases Unvaccinated Dec 24th](#): 1536
7. Rate of Infection Fully Vaccinated:
 - $7425/11383811 \times 100\ 000 = 65.22$
8. Rate of Infection Unvaccinated:
 - $1536/2629289 \times 100\ 000 = 58.42$