



NEVADA FACULTY ALLIANCE
840 S. Rancho Dr., Suite 4-571
Las Vegas, Nevada 89106

Date: August 3, 2021

To: Nevada State Board of Health (Dr. Jon Pennell, D.V.M., Chairperson; Dr. Jeffrey Murawsky, M.D., Vice Chair; Dr. Trudy Larson, M.D.; Dr. Monica Ponce, D.D.S.; Judith Bittner; Charles Smith), Chief Medical Officer Ihsan Azzam, Ph.D., M.D.; Director Richard Whitley, M.S.

From: Kent Ervin, State President, Nevada Faculty Alliance

Subject: Mandatory COVID vaccinations for NSHE students

On July 28, the state Nevada Faculty Alliance (NFA) issued a [statement supporting preventive measures against COVID-19](#) on campuses of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). We urged the NSHE Board of Regents, Chancellor Rose, and the Presidents of NSHE colleges and universities to take strong measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as campuses return to full in-person operation in the Fall 2021 semester in the face of the recent surge of the Delta variant.

NSHE legal counsel has since issued an [analysis that only the State Board of Health may require vaccinations for NSHE university and college students](#). *We therefore urgently request the State Board of Health to consider the medical efficacy and necessity of COVID vaccinations and testing of NSHE university and college students and to issue an emergency regulation to give NSHE guidance and authority on mandatory vaccinations and testing. We ask that you place an item on the agenda for your August 10 emergency meeting to discuss consider this issue.*

Widespread vaccination is the most effective and safe way to prevent serious illness and reduce transmission from all current variants of COVID-19. Over [600 universities and colleges nationally](#) are implementing mandatory vaccinations for students, faculty, and staff. At present, NSHE has said vaccines would be mandatory only after FDA full approval. Other institutions don't agree. For example, the [University of California](#) and [California State University](#) systems have issued vaccination mandates and a federal court upheld a mandatory vaccination requirement at the [University of Indiana](#). The NFA urges a mandatory vaccination requirement for all NSHE faculty, staff, and students as soon as possible.

Short of mandatory vaccination, frequent testing of non-vaccinated individuals can catch positive cases in time to prevent further spread. The [State of Nevada has now issued a requirement](#) for state employees, including NSHE faculty and staff, who do not provide proof of vaccination to be tested at least weekly. The NFA supports frequent mandatory testing for non-vaccinated

faculty, staff, and also students. Testing may serve as an incentive for getting vaccinated, and it puts in place the infrastructure for tracking vaccinations pending to FDA full approval.

NSHE faculty and staff employees are required to work indoors in close quarters where social distancing is difficult with the much larger number of students, who statistically are in age groups less likely to be vaccinated at this time. Although faculty and staff will all be vaccinated (or tested weekly), the vaccine is not 100% effective, nor are masks, so the presence of unvaccinated students on campus, even if masked, will result in entirely preventable transmissions of this deadly disease from students to other students, faculty, and staff. Governor Sisolak's mandate for vaccination and testing of employees on campus will do little good if students are not subject to the same standards. While encouragement for voluntary compliance is important, traditional college-age students (18-25) tend to feel invulnerable and their cases are often milder (with variants to date); however, viral transmission is blind to age.

We do believe that weekly testing (or at another frequency supported by the science) for students who are exempted from vaccinations should be free of charge, but that is a matter of implementation for NSHE.

The State Board of Health must of course base your considerations on sound medical evidence and not treat this as a political issue. The American College Health Association has issued a [statement against state governmental restrictions on COVID prevention measures by higher education institutions](#). Fortunately, Nevada has not taken such actions but rather has proactively fought the spread of the virus under the leadership of Governor Sisolak. However, until the State Board of Health takes action on student vaccinations and testing, these measures could be delayed resulting in the same effect.

Students are returning to campuses statewide in two or three weeks. Action is needed now. Please do all you can to help us as faculty and NSHE institutions to stop the spread. Thank you for your consideration.

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The [Nevada Faculty Alliance](#) is the independent statewide association of faculty members at the colleges and universities of the [Nevada System of Higher Education](#). The NFA is affiliated with the [American Association of University Professors](#), which advocates for academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty rights. The NFA works to empower faculty to be wholly engaged in our mission to help students succeed.

Contact: Kent Ervin, NFA State President, kent.ervin@nevadafacultyalliance.org, 775.453-6837