

From: [Pete Martini](#)
To: [Joseph P. Filippi](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Board of Health Emergency MTG 08/20
Date: Thursday, August 19, 2021 3:51:09 PM

Members of the Board of Health,

My name is Pete Martini, I am a social psychologist specializing in public and population health, and I currently teach at Nevada State College. I am strongly in favor of a vaccine mandate for all NSHE students who plan to be on or visit their campuses. I understand the difficulty of your current decisions. There is a very powerful and successful misinformation campaign surrounding both the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine and the virus itself. Much of this misinformation can be plainly observed in the myriad comments the Board is now faced with (e.g. several comments that inaccurately use quotes from K. Mullis to disparage the use of PCR tests). I do not envy you your upcoming decision. However, I would like to mention a couple things:

- 1.) the Board's ability to mandate a vaccine is not new or even unusual – all schools have a series of vaccines they require otherwise healthy individuals, I myself started college in and around a time of significant meningitis scare wherein many universities started mandating new vaccinations against meningitis for any enrolled student;
- 2.) any vaccine mandate does NOT trample on the rights and liberties of Nevadans, rather it imposes a public health response to individual behavior (as public health policy often strives to do) – as Ezra Taft Benson has said, “You are free to choose, but not free to alter the consequences of your decision.” A mandate for NSHE institutions does not “force” folks to get vaccinated any more than I was “forced” to obtain a meningitis vaccine. My desire to go to school trumped my belief at the time that I did not ***need*** a meningitis vaccine. Even in the face of a mandate choice abounds. There are robust exceptions for strongly held religious beliefs, and as the home school community has shown, novel mechanisms for engaging in learning for those who just ***don't*** want to be vaccinated for non-religious reasons;
- 3.) NSHE institutions have been, and would continue, to offer on-site vaccines to students who want/need them free of cost. This removes any structural barrier than may prevent students from obtaining the vaccine. If a student wants to participate in face-to-face instruction or live on campus their lives would be little disrupted by requiring them to obtain the vaccine.
- 4.) though college students are largely a healthy demographic, they are not the only bodies that occupy college campuses. Most NSHE institutions have programs that engage with community, they have myriad non-student workers, they have non-college-aged citizens who routinely travel to, or work from, campus. Mandating a vaccine for a largely (but not completely) able-bodied group of people helps protect members of our community who are more vulnerable.
- 5.) no level of factual information will change the minds of Nevadans vis-à-vis the vaccine. Our vaccine positioning is largely entwined with identity, which makes it a particularly insidious belief to change. In other words, there is no “win” for you folks. There is simply a decision that ***is*** supported by science and a position that you all know is ***not*** supported by the current science. This is not an area of ambiguous science, please do not treat it as if it is. Emotion clouds the rational judgement of many of us right now, and in this moment it is your duty to act logically when society is largely too emotional to engage do the heavy

cognitive lift of rationally evaluating scientific research on public health, immunology, and social epidemiology.

I wish you the best as you move through what will undoubtedly be a...unique...public comment session. I hope you strive to follow the science of the moment and the legal history that has guided public health policy.

Best,
Pete Martini
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Nevada State College