

**From:** [Peter Yong](#)  
**To:** [Joseph P. Filippi](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment for emergency BOH meeting on 8.20.21  
**Date:** Thursday, August 19, 2021 8:47:23 PM

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Dear board,  
Please find my written comment below.

Dear board of health,

I urge you to resist further reducing Nevada's college and university system to an organ of the totalitarian bio-security state rapidly being erected before our eyes. I am familiar with the world of higher education, holding multiple graduate degrees and having taught college courses for a number of years. I'll thus leave it to others demonstrate how compelling students to subject themselves to an experimental gene therapy runs roughshod over the constitution and may very well lead the citizenry to doubt whether we are, in fact, a nation of laws, and not a failed state run by the dictates of petty tyrants. I'll also leave it to others to point out the troubling gaps in the logic of mandating a gene therapy that, contrary to the initial promises of the pharmaceutical industry, eliminates neither infection with nor transmission of a virus, a virus whose mortality rate is surprisingly low for one causing an allegedly world ending pandemic. No. I'll leave it to others to address these matters. Rather, I want to call attention to how this proposal undermines the very idea of higher education. In the Western tradition, higher education has always been associated with the expansion of freedom. From their inception, medieval universities aimed at cultivating the liberal arts, the arts requisite to life as a free, liber, human being, rather than a slave. And freedom continued to be a paramount value in higher education through the modern era. In an age where kings and priests attempted to censor public discourse, the philosophers of the Enlightenment rallied under the injunction: "Sapere aude! Dare to know!" Kant, perhaps the greatest philosopher of the Enlightenment, expresses the spirit of the movement as follows: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding!" For Kant, to be truly educated is not merely to be able to reiterate approved opinions (#safeandeffective #trustthescience #mostsecureinhistory), but to have the capacity and courage to think for oneself. Unfortunately, these Enlightenment values have been assaulted of late in the contemporary corporate university. Tenured professors have been replaced by an army of administrators and an adjunct labor force who know their contracts will not be renewed if they question party dogma. Students self-censor, afraid of being reported for micro-aggressions or wrong-think. And faculty and students alike live in fear of being the next targets for cancellation. But, as yet, the uprooting of autonomy has not been complete. For, even though they might stifle all external expressions of dissent, students and faculty could still choose what was allowed within the confines of their own bodies. This small flicker of freedom in the realm of bodily autonomy is now about to be extinguished. This, then, is the choice which confronts you today, and I fear that if you choose wrongly and give the university a final shove into the abyss of totalitarianism, the consequences of your decision will be complete and irrevocable. Will you expel the last shreds of autonomy from higher education? Will the motto of future students be not "Sapere aude! Dare to use your own

understanding!", but "obey without question", or more accurately "abandon hope all ye who enter here"?

Peter Yong, Ph.D.