



COUNCIL OF FACULTY SENATE CHAIRS

Date: August 19, 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: Amy Pason, Chair of Faculty Senate Chairs Council on behalf of the 2021-22 Council of Chairs

Subject: Public Comment on Agenda Item 2, August 20, 2021 Meeting

The Faculty Senates are the elected bodies of our Nevada State Higher Education institutions that represent both academic and administrative faculty across the system. As part of shared governance, Faculty Senates give recommendation and/or have decision-making authority with institutional operations, curriculum, and, most importantly, the success and well-being of our students. The Council of Faculty Senate Chairs includes all chairs of our individual institution Senates (and the NSHE System Office), and represent the interests of all faculty.

We support amending the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 441A.755 to include requiring university students show proof of immunity to COVID-19, and that this amendment also include state college and community college students at all our NSHE institutions. Our ability to return to in-person learning requires that we slow the spread of COVID-19 through continued use of facial coverings, hygiene protocols, *and* vaccinating all those on our campuses for our educational mission.

In-person learning requires larger groups meeting together for extended period of time; classroom instruction is a riskier activity that requires increased safety measures. Evidence suggests vaccinated individuals have less ability to transmit the virus to others as well as are less likely to get severely sick if they contract the virus. Ensuring students are vaccinated means that there will be less potential spread of the virus. Moreover, students' education will have less disruption as it is less likely vaccinated students will need to miss in-class instruction as they will either 1) not become sick; 2) have symptoms for shorter durations of time; or 3) have to quarantine for a shorter amount of time if they are a contact of someone who tests positive.

As a public health matter, ensuring that all our on campuses are vaccinated also impacts our surrounding communities. Students on all our campuses live in, work in, and partake in activities in our communities. Our ability to interact safely on our campuses also means that our educational activities will not increase the risk of transmission in our community. The Board of Health decision on a student vaccine requirement also has implications for the health of Nevada as a whole.



We want to thank the Board for taking up this important measure to address a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for higher education students. As has been noted, [NSHE legal counsel issued an analysis](#) stating that only the State Board of Health may require vaccinations for NSHE university and college students. We are, therefore, relying on your guidance to help us keep our campuses and communities safe.

We are looking forward to the start of Fall semester and reconnecting with our students and the full campus community. We hope the Board believes, as we do, that requiring COVID-19 vaccines of our students is the best tool we have for having a safe academic year as well as a step forward in controlling this pandemic.

