



University of Nevada, Reno

2021-22 Executive Board
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August 6, 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
2021-22 Faculty Senate

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

The Faculty Senate of the University of Nevada, Reno is the elected body representing both academic and administrative faculty. As part of shared governance, the Faculty Senate gives recommendations and/or has decision-making authority with institutional operations, curriculum, and, most importantly, the success and well-being of our students.

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 order for our campuses to have a safe return to in-person instruction, we will need to utilize all the COVID safety measures available. Last year, our campus offered a majority of courses remotely to reduce gatherings of faculty and students on campus. This year, we no longer have requirements for social distancing or reduced capacity numbers, assuming that community transmission would be low and vaccination rates would be high. As we enter into the 4th semester of this pandemic, our return to in-person learning is challenged by low vaccination rates and the surge of the Delta variant. Therefore, we need our campus community to be vaccinated to be able to offer in-person instruction with as few disruptions due to the virus as possible.

A student vaccine mandate is the most effective and efficient way to ensure campus health and safety and allow for in-person instruction. 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.

Our campus is doing our part to keep our students, staff, and faculty safe with continued facial-covering requirements and hygiene, but we need the vaccine mandate in addition. We can ensure our students' education will not be disrupted this year due to outbreaks, the need to go remote, or students becoming ill for long periods of time if all get vaccinated. Moreover, this will help us do our part as a campus to limit the spread in our own communities.

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.