

RESOLUTION

ACFS Opposes statewide restriction or legislation that limits public health mitigation measures in the State University System during a global pandemic

Whereas, the Advisory Council of Faculty Senates (ACFS) is charged with advising the Chancellor of the State University System (SUS), the Board of Governors, the State Board of Education, the Legislature, the Governor and other officials and organizations involved in the establishment of policies, administration, or funding of public higher education in Florida; and

Whereas, as of March 9, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis declared a Public Health Emergency in the State of Florida that lasted until May 3, 2021, and current infection and hospitalization levels are in excess of those observed during that time period; and

Whereas, all counties in the State of Florida have high community transmission rates of COVID-19 as of August 10th, 2021; and

Whereas, Florida is currently the national epicenter of the Delta variant, a much more infectious and easily transmissible version of the virus that can infect and be spread by even fully vaccinated individuals, and therefore poses a special threat to faculty with underlying health conditions and unvaccinated children; and

Whereas, as of July 27, 2021, the CDC added a recommendation for fully vaccinated people to wear masks in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission and public health experts overwhelmingly agree that there are several mitigation strategies that would be effective in controlling the spread of COVID-19 that are currently restricted by executive orders of the Florida Governor (i.e., EO 21102) or state legislation (SB 2006); and

Whereas, the Florida SUS institutions are returning to in-person classroom settings in the fall semester 2021 using classroom configurations that will not permit social distancing; and

Whereas, multiple peer-reviewed studies support the use of masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and found no adverse effects on those wearing masks for extended amounts of time (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>); and

Whereas, public health decisions are best made locally through the action of the individual Boards of Trustees and University administrators based on public health metrics during a pandemic that is not restricted by statewide legislation that ties the hands of leaders; and

Whereas, the Florida SUS institutions have an obligation to protect the health and well-being of their faculty, students, staff, and surrounding communities; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Advisory Council of Faculty Senates petition Governor Ron DeSantis to end Executive Order 21102 and its limitations on local mitigation actions to allow individual Universities to decide how to protect students, staff, faculty and administration in the upcoming fall

semester, and petition members of the Florida Legislature to prioritize the health and safety of the State Universities in Florida more generally by repealing or amending the related limitations in SB 2006.