

NEWS RELEASE

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Florida Board of Governors: Stop Undermining Public Health and Hurting Our Students and Communities

UFF seeks public records regarding Covid safety at colleges, universities

The United Faculty of Florida continues to believe that the health and safety of Florida's higher education students, faculty and staff should take precedence over the political ambitions of Gov. DeSantis. Last month, our state's higher education community returned to the classroom without Covid-19 safety mandates. Since that time, Florida's public health crisis has worsened. While our citizens continue to get sick and die from a preventable virus, Gov. DeSantis and public education leaders continue to play politics with the lives of our children, our youth, our elders and everyone in between. It is time for Florida's leaders to take action and institute common-sense safety measures that will protect Florida's higher education community. Florida's universities and colleges should be places to earn degrees instead of death sentences.

To safeguard the health of Florida's public university and state college students, staff and communities, the United Faculty of Florida (UFF) has submitted public records requests to Gov. DeSantis' office, the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors and to the administrations of more than two dozen of the universities and colleges where we have local chapters around the state. We are seeking communications from these entities regarding restrictions upon:

- The wearing of masks by students and/or employees while on the campus.
- Vaccinations against the SARS-CoV-2 virus by students and/or employees.
- Course modalities to be used in delivering instruction to students.

If these entities are willing to place the lives of Florida's higher ed students, faculty and staff at unnecessary risk, then we believe the public has the right to see and hear why.

In addition, based upon reports from leaders in our local chapters, UFF has sent a [cease and desist letter](#) to the Florida Board of Governors, telling them to stop interfering in local efforts to bargain safer working conditions for Florida's higher ed campuses. According to Florida statute, all bargaining that affects a local campus must occur between the local Boards of Trustees and local union members — the individuals who are best positioned to account for the specific pandemic conditions affecting that region. Political interference that undermines public health has no place in Florida, and we hope that this letter will end any such reported efforts on the part of the Board of Governors.

UFF believes this is a public health concern affecting all Floridians, and we will not give up this fight until we are certain all of Florida's higher education community is not being placed at personal risk for political ends. We will share our findings with the public as we continue to advocate for healthy learning environments for all.

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The United Faculty of Florida represents over 25,000 faculty at all 12 public universities, 15 colleges and Saint Leo University, along with graduate assistants at four universities.

**The Higher Education Affiliate of Florida Education Association, National Education Association,
American Federation of Teachers, and AFL-CIO**