

January 10, 2022

Florida Board of Governors
State University System
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

Chancellor Criser and Chair Kitson,

As your partner in ensuring the success of every student for the public good of Florida, the United Faculty of Florida as well as our faculty leaders on campuses around the state ask you to implement common sense safety measures right now for the health – physical, mental, and economic—of Floridians for the long-term.

Due to the stunning rise of COVID-19 infections in Florida, caused almost entirely by the virus's new Omicron variant, it is imperative that Florida's colleges and universities remain safe and active centers of learning despite worsening public health conditions. While we appreciate your December 27th letter to the higher education community that encourages mask wearing, consistent testing, and full vaccinations, we believe more can be done to safeguard Florida's most vulnerable students, faculty, and staff and to ensure continuity of instruction and student success during this new wave of infections. For example, a number of universities around the country have moved to remote learning for the first two weeks of the year, as a short-term precaution that can yield long-term public health results.

On behalf of the over 25,000 higher education faculty and the 8,000 graduate students whom the United Faculty of Florida represents, we write to ask that local higher education campuses across the state be given the leave and the resources to take all necessary precautions that will prevent the spread of this virus throughout the first weeks of the semester, up to and including short-term remote learning during peak infection waves.

Public health policies should never be determined by political expediency in Tallahassee; instead, it is the local administrators, students, faculty, and community leaders who can determine how to best mitigate the impacts of the Omicron variant on their local campuses. By giving local campuses the authority and flexibility to respond to this wave of infections as it affects them differently across the state, we believe that you will not only keep the students, faculty, staff, and communities of Florida's higher education system safe and healthy in the coming months, but you will also set an important standard for best practices in response to future public health crises.

Sincerely,



Andrew Gothard
President, United Faculty of Florida

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