

UFF-UF Letter to President Fuchs

September 09, 2021

Dear President Fuchs,

I am writing a quick follow up communication regarding today's letter from the Alachua County Commission asking that the University of Florida follow science and the lead of Alachua County and implement a policy of requiring masks indoors.

The reason I am writing this additional communication is that I have already received this evening dozens of messages from faculty, students, and members of the community--many of which I'm sure you are receiving as well--calling on UF to implement an indoor masking policy immediately. I am urging you President Fuchs to follow the recommendation of the Alachua County Commission and require the wearing of masks indoors. The membership of the United Faculty of Florida, UF is 100% in support of this policy (a remarkable consensus for faculty on any issue!) and I would be remiss in my duties as a union president if I did not share this information with you.

Within hours of Commissioner Ken Cornell's letter being made public--this happened in the midst of my three-hour history research seminar today--the Gainesville Sun began working on a piece on the county's call for UF and Santa Fe College to implement mask requirements on our respective campuses. We may expect significant, national media coverage of this issue in the days to come. I hope that we will be able to make the exciting announcement tomorrow that we are joining with our County government in doing our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In turn, this will lead to a major boost in the morale and spirits of our entire campus community! In addition, President Fuchs I urge our campus to immediately implement a vaccine requirement with limited disability and religious exceptions. President Biden stated today that our nation has suffered tremendously due to the failure of our society to move forward with a vaccination strategy that preserves the health and well being of residents. As a result, the federal government, which provides an enormous percentage of UF's overall budget, is rapidly implementing vaccine mandates that will affect approximately one hundred million Americans. But why should our university wait for a federal order on vaccines when we can do the right thing now--on our own volition.

This is an historic moment for our campus and our nation and we have the opportunity to do a great and inspiring thing in defense of human health and dignity. In conclusion, please let me know what UFF-UF can do to assist you in implementing revised UF policies regarding masks and vaccines going forward.

Sincerely Yours,

Paul Ortiz

UFF-UF Chapter President

United Faculty of Florida—University of Florida