

Faculty Senate Resolution on COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement for Northern Kentucky University

Whereas other academic institutions have moved to require vaccinations on campus, and whereas the Faculty Senate at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) recognizes vaccination as the leading prevention strategy to protect individuals from SARS-CoV-2, commonly known as COVID-19, let it be resolved that the faculty proposes that NKU initiates a requirement of full vaccination of all students, faculty, and staff by the earliest practical date. The Senate proposes that exemptions be made available for faculty, staff, and students of NKU who do not work or study on-campus, or who have documented medical conditions or bona fide religious beliefs that would justify an exemption.

NKU is in the eighteenth month of COVID impacts on our operations. The Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 has proven to be much more contagious than previous variants, which has resulted in significant increases in cases in the region,¹ state,² and country.³ While various mitigation strategies have proven effective at decreasing the spread of infection, the CDC “Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)”⁴ dated July 23, 2021 states the following:

1. “IHE administrators can help protect students, faculty, and staff and slow the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging vaccinations...”
2. “IHEs where all students, faculty, and staff are fully vaccinated...can return to full capacity in-person learning without requiring or recommending masking or physical distancing for people who are fully vaccinated.”
3. In cases where the IHE community is not fully vaccinated the IHE “requires decision making to protect” those who are unvaccinated.

In short, according to the CDC guidance “vaccination is the leading prevention strategy to protect individuals from COVID-19 disease and end the COVID-19 pandemic.” Furthermore, “current COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States are safe and effective, widely accessible in the U.S., and available at no cost to all people living in the U.S.” The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has now been fully approved by the FDA.⁵

As a model for the community, NKU should be leading the way in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, vaccine requirements have been shown to increase rates even over voluntary incentives.⁶ As expected, other colleges and universities are responding by adding vaccine requirements for faculty, staff, and/or students with the number now reaching 805, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. This includes 351 public institutions with 150 requiring all students and employees to be vaccinated.⁷ In addition, the *Association of American Medical Colleges*⁸ along with almost 60 other organizations, including the *American College Physicians*,⁹ support required COVID-19 vaccines. The Supreme Court denied a request without comment by students at Indiana University challenging the university’s vaccine requirement on constitutional grounds and allowed the requirement to continue.¹⁰ In our region, the Ohio State University, Xavier University, and Mount Saint Joseph University recently announced a vaccine requirement.⁷

Finally, NKU has committed to student success as exemplified in the *Success by Design* (SBD) strategic framework. We know that in-person, on-campus engagement between students, faculty, and staff is critical to student success. Additionally, the COVID pandemic has resulted in significant financial impacts for NKU, which will only worsen with another suspension of on-campus operations. A vaccine requirement is an important tool to continue in-person, on-campus student engagement.

References (all accessed on August 25, 2021)

1. <https://www.nku.edu/covid19/statistics.html>
2. <https://kycovid19.ky.gov>
3. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/covid-cases.html>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html>
5. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-covid-19-vaccine>
6. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/vaccine-mandates-are-lawful-effective-and-based-on-rock-solid-science/>
7. <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/live-coronavirus-updates/heres-a-list-of-colleges-that-will-require-students-to-be-vaccinated-against-covid-19>
8. <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-statement-covid-19-vaccine-requirements-medical-school-and-teaching-hospital-employees>
9. https://www.acponline.org/acp_policy/statements/joint_statement_covid_vaccine_mandate_2021.pdf
10. <https://www.scotusblog.com/2021/08/barrett-leaves-indiana-university-vaccine-mandate-in-place/>