



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, Faculty Senate
Mary Frances Early College of Education, Faculty Senate

September 13, 2021

Dean Alan Dorsey
Franklin College of Arts & Sciences

Dean Denise Spangler
Mary Frances Early College of Education

President Jere Morehead
The University of Georgia

Dear Dean Dorsey, Dean Spangler, and President Morehead

We write to you as the current Presidents of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate and the Mary Frances Early College of Education Faculty Senate at the University of Georgia to present you with a joint resolution that was adopted at our most recent Senate meetings. The resolution focuses on concerns related to USG's operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The full text of the resolution is included at the end of this letter.

The UGA Resolution on Vaccines and Masks was first considered by the Franklin College Senate in a more abbreviated form at a Special Meeting of the Franklin College Senate on Thursday, September 9. That meeting was held after 136 (and later that day by another 145) Franklin College faculty members petitioned Alan Dorsey, Dean of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences on August 16, 2021, as the Senate's By-Laws allow. At the meeting, which Dean Dorsey scheduled on August 25, 2021, Franklin faculty overwhelmingly supported the measure but called for different and more forceful wording. As a result, the Executive Committee crafted new language, and put it on the agenda of the first regularly scheduled meeting, which took place on September 9, 2021. The Mary Frances Early College of Education Senate took up the same measure. Both Senates passed the measure without amendment: the

Franklin Senate with only one dissenting vote and the MFECOECOE unanimously, and both voted to submit it jointly.

As you can see, the Resolution reflects our faculties' concern that USG's reopening policies are inconsistent with CDC recommendations and are risking the lives and long-term health of our students, staff, and faculty members, as well as the health of our family members and the larger Athens community. We are also greatly concerned that our already overburdened hospitals will be utterly overwhelmed.

We fully understand that millions of people risk exposure to COVID-19 at work and at school, but universities are especially dangerous places during a pandemic, which is why we require vaccines for things like measles and meningitis. Like K-12 schools, universities involve close contact indoors over long periods of time, but class sizes can be much larger—three hundred plus—and students sit elbow to elbow in lecture halls, they live packed together in dorms, they eat together in dining halls, they socialize together, and they go to massive athletic events together. Faculty members are already reporting infection rates in their classes as high as twenty percent, and numbers like those only reflect the students who realize that they are infected and report positive tests on DawgCheck. Without regular testing, we must assume that most infections go uncounted.

We fully understand that UGA, USG, and the Board of Regent's intention was to provide students with a normal, in-person school year. We all want that too, and we agree that in-person learning has advantages that cannot be realized when teaching online. However, we also know that the only way to approximate normalcy is to mandate masks and vaccines, as over a thousand other colleges and universities have done.

Without mitigation efforts, we cannot offer students a proper education. Our students, faculty, and staff are already having to go in and out of quarantine and isolation. Students are either missing classes, being forced to watch passively and remotely from a distance or are attending classes knowing they may be COVID-positive because they fear falling behind. Some of our students, colleagues, and children have already been gravely ill. Without the protections of masks and vaccines, we cannot guarantee students a proper education. Even if we could record all lecture classes and make them available only to quarantining or isolating students, students cannot do labs or archival research from home, they cannot participate in discussions or performances from home, and they cannot enjoy all our campus has to offer from home. Our resolution asks UGA to make a more normal and safe school year possible. Hopefully, it is not too late.

The text of the resolution, as you can see, condemns the lack of COVID-19 vaccination and mask mandates and calls on UGA's administration to take immediate action to protect our campus. It also recognizes that because USG and UGA have denied faculty permission to change the modality of their courses even in cases where there are large numbers of recorded positive cases, some faculty may be violating USG policies in the name of public health and their students' and families' safety. While the Franklin and MFECOECOE Senates do not encourage faculty to violate USG rules, we assert that such

faculty members would be acting ethically, as good citizens, and in concert with CDC guidelines if they did so.

We would like to note that #9, the resolution to urge USG and UGA to reopen public COVID-19 testing sites similar to last year's Legion Field site was somewhat out of date by the time we passed this measure. It is our understanding that UGA is already offering asymptomatic testing comparable to what was offered at Legion Field last year but in a different, South Campus location. The Senates chose not to amend the resolution, however, we discussed students' complaints about the current testing facilities. While we recognize the herculean efforts of the College of Veterinary Medicine and the University Health Center staff who are carrying out some 2,000 tests per week and treating sick students, we note that the number being tested is a tiny fraction of UGA's 38,000 students, let alone faculty and staff. Students are calling for testing on more locations on campus, testing on the weekend, free rapid tests, and they point to the difficulty of getting symptomatic students to South Campus by bus without infecting others. We therefore respectfully request that UGA immediately poll students about their experience of the testing already offered and evaluate whether the existing testing service is reaching all students who want a test. We ask that UGA provide these results in a timely fashion.

Given the urgency of the situation, we, the presidents of the Franklin College Senate and the Mary Frances Early College of Education, respectively, request a response to these resolutions from all of you by September 17, 2021 regarding the concerns raised and actions requested. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully,



Cindy Hahamovitch
B. Phinizy Spalding Distinguished Professor of History
President, Franklin Faculty Senate

and



Janette R. Hill
Professor, Department of Career and Information Studies
President, Mary Frances Early College of Education Senate

cc. Professor Barbara A. Biesecker, Chair, UGA University Council Executive Committee
cc. Sherry Gray, Administrative Specialist II, Franklin College

UGA Faculty Senate Resolution on Vaccines and Masks

Adopted September 9, 2021 and September 10, 2021

Co-sponsored by the Franklin College and Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate and the Mary Frances Early College of Education Senate

- 1) WHEREAS, the Georgia State Constitution describes “protection to person and property” as “the paramount duty of government” (Article I, Section I, Paragraph II) [[link](#)];
- 2) And WHEREAS, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by the FDA as of 23 August 2021 [[link](#)];
- 3) And WHEREAS, vaccines have long been required for first-year student residence on the campuses of the University System of Georgia, including the MMR (Mumps, Measles and Rubella), chickenpox, whooping cough, and hepatitis vaccines [[link](#) and [link](#)];
- 4) And WHEREAS, there is precedent for a mandatory emergency vaccination campaign at the University of Georgia following an outbreak of measles in 1990 [[link](#)];
- 5) And WHEREAS, the legality of university COVID-19 vaccine mandates have been upheld by the United States Supreme Court on 17 August 2021 [[link](#)];
- 6) And WHEREAS, CDC guidance recommends that universities with partially vaccinated populations require masks indoors and physical distancing of 6 feet in congregate settings [[link](#)];
- 7) And WHEREAS, USG policy needlessly puts staff, students, faculty members, their family members, and community members at risk, as well as overburdening our already stressed hospitals and front-line medical workers;
- 8) And WHEREAS, vaccine and mask mandates are widespread among our peer and aspirational institutions, neighboring universities, and other public universities such as the University of Michigan system, the University of California system, and the University of North Carolina system [[link](#)];
- 9) It is therefore RESOLVED that we, the faculty senate of Franklin College of Arts and Sciences and the Mary Frances Early College of Education (MFE COE) at the University of Georgia, urge the USG and UGA leadership to reopen public COVID-19 testing facilities similar to the previous facility at Legion Field, given current shortages of test kits and appointments in Athens, GA.
- 10) It is therefore RESOLVED that we, the faculty of Franklin College and MFE COE, strongly condemn the University System of Georgia's failure to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations and public masking. We call on President Morehead, Dean Dorsey, and Dean Spangler to protect Franklin College and MFE COE students, faculty, and staff by immediately mandating vaccinations, and masks in public campus buildings, with exemptions for those with medical or religious objections.
- 11) It is therefore RESOLVED that if our administrators fail to act, we, the faculty of the Franklin College and the MFE COE, assert that faculty would be acting ethically, responsibly, and in accordance with CDC guidelines by changing the modality of their delivery of instruction to protect the campus and wider communities.