



**Press Release Fall COVID-Return and Triggers  
For Immediate Release**

**UFF-UCF Calls on the UCF Board of Trustees and the UCF Administration to Take  
Meaningful Action to Protect Our Community**

On August 16, 2021, the elected council of the United Faculty of Florida at UCF, our faculty union, held a meeting. In the wake of recent news regarding rapidly declining capacity at local hospitals, including ICU beds and ventilators, and in light of the recent re-appearance of the University's "COVID19 Triggers" webpage, the UFF-UCF council agreed on the following statement:

It is clear at this point that even fully vaccinated individuals can become ill and transmit SARs-CoV-2. At the same time, this "epidemic of the unvaccinated" places children under 12 and people who cannot be vaccinated at special risk. As UCF is not requiring masks, vaccines, or social distancing on campus, and as the delta variant appears to be orders of magnitude more transmissible than the alpha variant, we are increasingly concerned that the University's lack of action will lead to illness and death of these vulnerable populations. The climbing rates of child hospitalization and PICU hospitalization due to COVID-19 further supports this concern. We, the members of this campus community, have a responsibility to protect UCF's students, faculty and staff, and their families, and the wider community, and to help limit the spread of the virus. UCF's plan for "back to normal in the Fall" was made in the spring, before this dangerous and highly transmissible Delta Variant was a concern. UCF should be a model organization, in being willing to revise our plans based on new evidence.

Of the triggers specified on [UCF's COVID Decision Triggers page](#), some have already been met, or could be argued to be a concern:

- 1) Local hospitals are at capacity and are short on ICU beds or ventilators ("a significant, sustained increase in Orange and Seminole County hospital admissions", "insufficient ICU beds and respirators in the region") .
- 2) Community transmission is rampant, and is overwhelming the community's ability to trace contacts and limit exposure "degradation of robust testing capacity in the community, including screening and contact tracing for symptomatic individuals."

Our community's ability to contain the spread of the Delta variant has been seriously degraded. Many more of these triggers will likely be met, with potentially tragic consequences, once the Fall semester starts without reevaluating our plans. It would be irresponsible to continue with the assumption, one that seemed reasonable in the Spring, that vaccination would make all other protective measures moot in the Fall semester.

The CDC clearly recommends layered protections, including vaccines, masks, limiting exposure to crowded indoor spaces when we don't know who is vaccinated and where community transmission is high. Face to face classrooms, especially large classes that are close to the room's capacity, are precisely the situations that the CDC recommends people avoid when community transmission is high, as it is in Central Florida right now.

Last year, UCF demonstrated that we know how to handle a pandemic responsibly. Many instructors have also demonstrated that they have very effective methods for teaching classes in modalities other than face to face.

We call on the UCF Board of Trustees and the UCF Administration to take meaningful steps to protect the health and safety of its students and employees. This could be accomplished by moving to remote instruction for a limited time, moving larger classes online, and moving smaller classes to larger rooms to enable physical distancing. It can also be accomplished through enforcing a mask mandate and social distancing on campus, and by requiring students and employees to be vaccinated to come on campus.

**The time to act is now.**

United Faculty of Florida-UCF Council

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