**Resolution on Allowing University of Arkansas Employees the Choice to Work Remotely**

Whereas, the Covid-19 pandemic has killed at least 6,969 Arkansans, including 412 in Washington County, as of September 1 (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/arkansas-covid-cases.html> );

Whereas, COVID-19 has infected at least 455,781 Arkansans, including more than 40,000 in Washington County, as of September 1 (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/arkansas-covid-cases.html> );

Whereas, when the Administration decreed last Spring that all classes would be face-to-face in the Fall of 2021, the number of COVID cases in the state and region was in steep decline and most expected widespread vaccination to keep it that way (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/arkansas-covid-cases.html> );

Whereas, since the Spring decisions requiring faculty, instructors, and graduate assistants to teach in person and the staff to return to their offices, the situation has not played out as expected;

Whereas, in the past Summer the Delta Variant of COVID has become the dominant strain in Arkansas (<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2021/aug/15/northwest-arkansas-health-officials-weigh-in-on/> );

Whereas, the Delta Variant of COVID-19 releases 1260 times more viral particles than earlier variants, making it much more contagious; (<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2021/aug/15/northwest-arkansas-health-officials-weigh-in-on/> , <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/5-things-to-know-delta-variant-covid>);

Whereas, the Summer saw the emergence of widespread vaccine hesitancy, especially in our region;

Whereas, the Mayo Clinic’s Vaccine Tracker indicates that, as of September 2, only 41.8% of Arkansans are fully vaccinated (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/coronavirus-covid-19/vaccine-tracker> );

Whereas, the Mayo Clinic’s Vaccine Tracker indicates that, as of September 2, 46.7% of Arkansans have not yet received even one dose of a COVID vaccine (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/coronavirus-covid-19/vaccine-tracker> );

Whereas, the University does not know what percentage of the ***whole*** student body is fully vaccinated (<https://news.uark.edu/articles/57505/adhe-releases-partial-vaccination-numbers-for-campus-community> );

Whereas, the Arkansas Department of Health reported on September 1, that over one-third of the Arkansas-resident students are not fully vaccinated (<https://news.uark.edu/articles/57505/adhe-releases-partial-vaccination-numbers-for-campus-community>);

Whereas, “Breakthrough infections” among fully vaccinated account for 15% of the cases in Arkansas (<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2021/aug/15/northwest-arkansas-health-officials-weigh-in-on/>);

Whereas, the Delta Variant and vaccine hesitancy are fueling a second wave of COVID across the state, with cases, hospitalizations, and deaths approaching their January 2021 highs (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/arkansas-covid-cases.html>);

Whereas, on July 30, 2021, the situation was so grave that Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson declared a 60-day “statewide state of disaster emergency related to public health, resulting from the catastrophic statewide impact of the Delta Variant of COVID-19 on the healthcare system of Arkansas” (<https://governor.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/executiveOrders/21.07_.29_EO_21-14_.pdf> );

Whereas, the UAMS Fay W. Boozmen College of Public Health’s August 23, 2021 *Covid-19 Forecasts in Arkansas* predicts even more very substantial increases in the number of COVID infections, hospitalizations, and deaths in the state of Arkansas and Washington County during the coming weeks (<https://publichealth.uams.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/08/UAMS-COPH-COVID-Report-august2021-final.pdf> );

Whereas, the State of Arkansas has prohibited the University of Arkansas from requiring students and employees to receive one of the three readily available and safe COVID-19 vaccines, even though the Pfizer vaccine has received full FDA approval, vaccines have been required in the past (most recently MMR in the winter of 2019-2020), and Governor Hutchinson has declared that widespread vaccination is the best way to mitigate the effects of COVID-19;

Whereas, University of Arkansas faculty and staff have demonstrated the ability to advance the university’s core missions of research, education, and service while working remotely;

Whereas, certain employees of the University of Arkansas fall into high-risk mortality categories if they become infected with Covid-19;

Whereas, certain employees are the primary caregivers of children under 12, who are ineligible for vaccinations, and other high-risk groups;

Whereas, other events in late August and early September have increased fears among faculty, students, and staff that the current wave will continue to threatened their health through the end of the semester:

* The vaccine incentive program for students was not launched until August 11, well after the date necessary for the vaccine to take full effect by the August 23 start of classes, and did not require participants to vaccinate until the eve of the September 1 drawing (<https://health.uark.edu/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination-incentives.php> );
* The University witnessed the largest Greek Rush in its history and the largest in the SEC this fall, even though a study published by the Centers for Disease Control found that the Greek Life Rush in the fall of 2020 was a major spreader of the virus on the University of Arkansas campus (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7001a5.htm> , <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2021/jan/08/cdc-study-suggests-virus-fueled-by-greek-life-at/?news-arkansas> );
* Although the Centers for Disease Control recommends that people stay at least six feet away from non-household members while attending outdoor events, football games will bring as many as 75,000 people to campus on six different Saturdays throughout the fall (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/gatherings.html> );

Whereas, the abrupt resignation of a chancellor in June made it difficult for the University to respond to the changing conditions brought about by the Delta Variant and vaccine hesitancy

(<https://www.nwahomepage.com/northwest-arkansas-news/university-of-arkansas-chancellor-joe-steinmetz-resigns-effective-june-18/> );

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Arkansas Faculty Senate calls for the University of Arkansas to revisit the decisions of the Spring and protect its employees by allowing them—be they faculty, graduate teaching assistants, or staff—the option to work or teach from home.

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