

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Archie Holmes, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Dr. Kevin Lemoine, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Dr. Patrick Francis, Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs

FROM: Dr. Karin Lewis  
UTRGV Faculty Senate President  
Faculty Senate Executive Committee

DATE: August 13, 2021

SUBJECT: **Faculty Senate Resolution**

### UTRGV Faculty Senate Resolution on COVID-19 Guidelines for Fall 2021

Whereas the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is dedicated to the shared, critical goal of keeping our institution open during the pandemic to best serve the needs of our community and citizens;

Whereas the UTRGV is firmly committed to student success, outstanding research and instruction, and community service;

Whereas experts estimate the new Delta variant's transmissibility may be at least two-fold higher with much greater hospitalization and severe illness than the original COVID-19 virus<sup>1</sup> and appropriate, scientifically-justified action is essential to keeping our institutions open;

Whereas the State of Texas is designated in the highest risk category for community transmission with 84% of Texas counties and 65 metro areas individually designated as high transmission, 56.3% of the population is not fully vaccinated (45% at 18 years of age or older) for COVID-19<sup>2</sup> and;

Whereas forecasters at the University of Texas at Austin COVID-19 Modeling Consortium concluded recently that most regions of the state are headed back to the capacity-busting hospitalization rates of January 2021 if abating measures, such as masking and social distancing, are not widely implemented;

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html>; accessed 8/9/2021;

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://healthdata.gov/download/dec4-x7dz/application%2Fpdf> located at [COVID-19 State Profile Report - Texas | HealthData.gov](#); accessed 8/9/2021;

Whereas many classrooms and other facilities used for academic purposes such as advising do not permit proper social distancing for faculty, staff, students, and visitors;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control is recommending that areas of high transmission of COVID-19 resume mask-wearing indoors;

Whereas the University is being constrained in its protective and preventive measures by current state-level policies; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the UTRGV Faculty Senate:

1. believes individual UT-System institutions should be given wide discretion in implementing pandemic policies based on their best professional, scientific judgment of the needs of their students, faculty, and staff based on local health conditions, public health standards, and sound scientific advice and evidence.
2. urges that UT-System institutions actively engage in shared governance with all their stakeholders in developing and adopting appropriate and effective scientifically supported policies to combat COVID-19 and share “best practices” across member institutions in coordination with UT-System leadership.

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**Faculty Senate**