

AAUP-Ohio State Executive Board Statement on COVID-19 Policies

August 21, 2021

Website: <https://www.ohiostateaaup.org/>

Take our survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/W9TRRGF>

With classes beginning next week, students, faculty, and staff will be returning en masse to campus, coming from all walks of life across the country and from many parts of the world. And we can expect the Delta variant to follow, augmenting the spike in cases and hospitalizations already underway [in Franklin County](#) and the counties that host OSU regional campuses. This pandemic is not over yet.

The Executive Board of AAUP-Ohio State believes that our faculty--along with our staff and students--deserve a safe and healthy workplace environment. We are concerned that efforts to mitigate the risks to our public health in the midst of an ongoing pandemic have not been sufficient. While we are appreciative of the administration's quick change in policy recently, requiring masking indoors, as well as changes to ventilation systems as reported by email and [in the Lantern](#), we feel that more sustained efforts need to be made to improve workplace and campus safety.

There are three areas that we feel especially deserve urgent attention from the OSU community as a whole at this time:

- *Flexibility in modes of faculty teaching.* Faculty members--including tenure-track faculty, lecturers and contingent faculty, and graduate students--are a diverse group of people with many different life experiences. We live with, or are ourselves, immunocompromised people; we are caregivers for children under 12, for whom the vaccine is not yet available; and we are dependent on schools and other facilities to remain open and safe for our ability to show up to work. The health of the campus community is tied to the health of all of our communities, and flexibility in the mode of instruction would greatly support our abilities to meet our obligations both at work and at home.
- *A vaccine requirement for students, staff, and faculty who are working and/or living on campus* (excluding individuals with legal and medical causes for exemption). We know that widespread, comprehensive vaccination is the best line of defense against COVID-19. Indeed, the university already requires students to receive [six vaccines for ten viruses](#) prior to attending the university. As this policy makes clear, getting vaccinated is a common-sense and well-established matter of promoting the public health and well-being of our campus communities. Many employers in higher education--including Big Ten schools like Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State,

Northwestern, Rutgers, and (pending FDA approval) Minnesota--are now requiring COVID-19 vaccination as a prerequisite for returning to on-campus work. While Ohio House Bill 244, signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine, prohibits Ohio public schools and colleges from requiring students to be vaccinated without full approval of the vaccinations by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the law does not go into effect until October 12. A pre-emptive action [along the lines of Cleveland State](#)'s can make a big difference in the here and now.

- *Equity across all campuses of Ohio State in terms of pandemic safeguards.* While we are still researching this issue, we have heard from faculty that not all campuses of Ohio State are receiving the same support in terms of changing ventilation systems and other measures. We also seek confirmation from the administration that needed financial and other support is being given to students, staff, and faculty on all campuses.

We know there are debates about these issues, and an ever-changing landscape. Vaccine requirements, for instance, require maintaining the level of access to vaccination and testing so that all students can meet the standards. Collaborative policy-making with faculty, staff, and students would be essential to ensure fair treatment for those who do not meet the requirement.

Faculty, staff, and students are the ones in the classrooms, in the labs, in the dorms, and in the cafeterias. Many do not have the option of working from home and sitting in separate offices. We must be central to university decision-making to ensure our safety.

We are eager to initiate and participate in faculty- and campus-wide dialogues and work with the administration to enact the best policies for the safety of our communities.

If you are a faculty, staff, or student at Ohio State, please take [our survey](#) to register your opinions and ideas on current policies, and stay tuned to [our website](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) pages for more. If you are a faculty member who is interested in joining the AAUP, please write to us at osuaaup@gmail.com.