



Office of the President

Dear Dr. Vogel,

Thank you for your important role in communicating with faculty on COVID-19 issues that affect the entire SMU community. We agree, of course, with the Faculty Senate that “SMU can and must protect the health, safety and welfare of the entire University community.”

In consultation with the President’s Executive Council (PEC), I have carefully considered the points raised by faculty and staff before and during the August 5 town hall and at Tuesday’s Faculty Senate meeting. As you know, we have issued a [temporary mask requirement for all indoor spaces on campus](#), but I’d like to address the other two faculty resolutions.

Let us start with the resolution regarding vaccines. You asked us to consider these options:

- Requiring vaccination of all students and employees, with appropriate medical and religious exemptions.
- Requiring vaccination of students with special legal classification/status or who present heightened pandemic health-related risks to the University, including those who are in residence on campus, participate in athletics, are in health professions and other subgroups.
- Requiring vaccination of students upon full approval of the COVID-19 vaccines by the FDA, with appropriate medical and religious exemptions.
- Instituting a formal “declination process” as noted in guidance by the American College Health Association (ACHA).

SMU’s ability to confirm anyone’s vaccination status is limited by Gov. Abbott’s Executive Order GA-38 and Senate Bill 968. As a practical matter, requiring students to get vaccinated as a condition of enrollment would be ineffective

when the University cannot request documentary proof of anyone's vaccination status.

In regards to the faculty's comment that GA-38 and SB 968 prohibit entities from requiring documentation of vaccination status *only* for COVID-19 vaccines administered under an emergency use authorization, SMU will reconsider its position when one of the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines obtains final approval by the FDA along with consideration of any statewide requirements.

In the meantime, recognizing that vaccination is the leading strategy to return to normal operations, SMU will continue its efforts to actively promote vaccination among students, staff and faculty. Specifically, SMU will continue to:

1. Make available both the Johnson & Johnson (one-dose) and Pfizer (two-dose) vaccines to all new and returning students, as well as to all employees and their qualified dependents at the SMU Dr. Bob Smith Health Center. Additionally, second doses of the Pfizer vaccine are available for individuals who received their first Pfizer dose elsewhere.
2. Communicate the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccination and details of where students and employees can get vaccinated.
3. Conduct educational messaging campaigns to build vaccine confidence among students and employees. SMU Community Action Network (SMU CAN) is charged with increasing awareness of personal responsibilities such as vaccination and vaccine status reporting.
4. Encourage all employees and students to voluntarily upload their vaccination cards to an easy-to-use online portal at the health center to give them convenient access to their vaccination status and provide the University with an accurate estimate of campus vaccination rates.

As the COVID-19 situation in North Texas evolves, as noted above, SMU will monitor developments and continuously reassess its position.

In connection with vaccines, the Faculty Senate also urged consideration of:

- Providing tuition or other monetary relief to vaccinated students.
- Assessing a COVID-19 health fee to unvaccinated students.
- Devising other means of physically distancing unvaccinated students from vaccinated University community members, while still providing

unvaccinated students comparable access to University services and the campus.

While these suggestions reveal practical intent, each creates its own issues in trying to implement them. As a result, we will continue to follow the contact tracing and isolation/quarantine protocols developed last year.

Your final resolution, related to campus air quality standards, calls for a return to the introduction of 50% outside air into campus HVAC systems and asks that the PEC commit to a public announcement of any decision to change the air mix at least 30 days prior to doing so. However, back in April, I sent a [message to the campus detailing the transitional steps](#) planned for the summer as we moved toward a traditional in-person semester for fall. That email, which was also posted on the Mustang Strong website, included notice that the high-level MERV-13 air filters would remain while buildings moved back to 30% outside air intake.

Stepping up to 50% outside air intake puts heavy stress and strain on the University's HVAC system. However, to provide an additional layer of comfort and protection during the fall re-entry period on campus, we will temporarily return to the higher air intake level of 50% until COVID-19 conditions improve.

We appreciate the offer of expertise from these law faculty members and will continue to seek and review input on vaccine-related governmental directives and other issues regarding community health.

Thank you, again, for ensuring that faculty and staff voices are heard concerning these issues. Please relay my appreciation of our employees' dedication to SMU and let them know I look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Gerald Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

R.
Gerald
Turner
President