

A Resolution Commending Faculty Grassroots Collective Action

Sponsored by Rosemary Peters-Hill and Kevin Ringelman

Whereas, during the spring and summer of 2021 the LSU A&M faculty engaged in an unprecedented level of grassroots collective action in the service of the campus community; and

Whereas, following the administration's underwhelming response to the Faculty Senate resolution calling for mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations to ensure a safe campus environment for the Fall 2021 semester,¹ over 125 faculty members exercised the right of the faculty to call a meeting of the Faculty Council;

Whereas, this historic meeting was a tremendous success, with over 800 attendees and the Faculty Council resolution calling for mandatory vaccinations or appropriate mitigation measures on campus receiving overwhelming support from 90% of the 636 faculty members who voted;² and

Whereas, the LSU Board of Supervisors, following discussion of the Faculty Council Resolution, passed a resolution asking the Louisiana Department of Health to add COVID-19 vaccines to its schedule of mandatory vaccinations when they became fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration;³ and

Whereas, throughout the summer of 2021 faculty volunteers sought both to ensure a safe campus environment for the Fall 2021 semester and to assert faculty governance through multiple actions, including but not limited to:

- Advocating for the inclusion of both subject-matter experts and teaching faculty on the decision-making bodies;⁴
- Providing public comments at the Board of Supervisors' meeting in Alexandria in June and in Baton Rouge in August;
- Defending academic freedom as set forth by PS-15 when challenged by the administration;⁵
- Circulating legal opinions written by LSU Law Center faculty that argued that there were no legal impediments to LSU mandating COVID-19 vaccinations, even while the vaccines were under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) status, and that LSU's legal arguments preventing the upper administration from imposing a vaccine mandate were inaccurate;⁶

- Drafting and circulating a petition calling for LSU to return to COVID-19 mitigation procedures from Fall 2020 that received nearly 350 faculty signatories in 48 hours and was submitted to the Board of Supervisors via public comment at its meeting in August;⁷
- Highlighting the desires of faculty and the dangers to the campus community through open letters and other coverage in *The Advocate*, *LA Illuminator*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, along with other publications, as well as television appearances on WBRZ and radio interviews on WRKF;⁸ and

Whereas, faculty diligence led to public demands that LSU both clarify and demonstrate equity in its COVID-19 accommodation policies;⁹ and

Whereas, prompt faculty grassroots action called attention to, and forced the tabling of, a proposed LSU Board of Supervisors’ resolution to abolish the Faculty Council as a deliberative body;¹⁰

Therefore, be it resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate commends the faculty who have dedicated themselves to collective efforts aimed at improving the welfare and safety of the campus community during this period; and

Therefore, be it further resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate endorses collective faculty efforts to exercise our role in shared governance, and directs the administration and Senate leadership to recognize them as appropriate and important; and

Therefore, be it further resolved that when official administrative bodies on campus do not represent faculty’s health, safety, and best interests, the Faculty Senate recognize the right of the Faculty Council to meet and speak as the voice of the faculty.

¹ Faculty Senate Resolution 21–05 sponsored by Inessa Bazayev and Tara Houston was passed by 52–1 vote on April 22, 2021; see attached.

² The Faculty Council met on May 25, 2021. See the attached resolution and minutes.

³ <https://lsu.edu/bos/docs/minutes/2021/2021-06-18-lsu-bos.pdf>; Item 12.

⁴ E.g. on the President’s Committee on Implementing the Faculty Council Resolution, which met on two dates—June 14 and 23, 2021—and was disbanded thereafter.

⁵ E.g. in conjunction with the circulation of the attached template letter from July 9, 2021. This letter became the basis for the University’s template letter dated July 15, 2021 (also attached).

⁶ These two separate memos by law professors Michael Malinowski and Edward Richards are attached.

⁷ This petition is attached.

⁸ Some of this coverage includes:

[The Flagship in America's Coronavirus Hotspot \(chronicle.com\)](https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-flagship-in-americas-coronavirus-hotspot)

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/08/12/faculty-worry-about-crowded-classes-nations-hottest-covid-hotspot>

[Opinion: In attempted Faculty Council dissolution, administration betrayed faculty | Opinion | Lsureveille.com](https://www.lsureveille.com/opinion/in-attempted-faculty-council-dissolution-administration-betrayed-faculty)

https://www.lsureveille.com/...ercrowded-classrooms-lack-of-covid-mitigation-measures/article_c13150f4-09c1-11ec-af12-47aeb260e753.html

<https://www.wafb.com/2021/05/19/lisu-faculty-members-want-covid-vaccination-mandate-students/>

<https://www.wbrz.com/news/vote-shows-most-lisu-faculty-wants-vaccine-requirement-for-students-next-semester>

<https://www.businessreport.com/business/lisu-employee-union-demands-tougher-covid-measures-faculty-weighs-legal-action>

⁹ The letter to the ADA coordinator sent on August 19, 2021, is attached.

¹⁰ A video of the meeting is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJqoUFTF53Q> .