

Joint Statement Regarding Dangerous Restrictions by States on COVID-19 Public Health Measures

August 2, 2021

U.S. colleges and universities will soon open for the fall 2021 semester, bringing together millions of students, faculty, and staff to resume on-campus activities. Most institutions plan to operate at full capacity: full classrooms and in-person instruction; full residence halls; full stadiums; full intramural and intercollegiate athletics; and a full array of social events. This comes at a particularly worrisome time, with the COVID-19 Delta variant, a far more aggressive and more transmissible COVID-19 strain, now so widespread across the country that it accounts for an estimated 83% of coronavirus cases. The increasing number of hospitalizations of unvaccinated teenagers and young adults is also deeply concerning. Colleges and universities have nearly 18 months of hard-won experience in responding to the pandemic and preventing and containing the spread of the virus on campus and in their surrounding communities. Continued success will require having all effective public health strategies at their disposal to curtail the Delta variant and prevent a surge in COVID-19 illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths this fall.

An increasing number of states have restricted the ability of colleges and other organizations to deploy an evidence-based combination of strategies to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks on campus and in surrounding communities and respond to them promptly and effectively should they occur. Some states forbid inquiries about an array of vaccinations, including COVID-19; ban vaccination requirements; block required COVID-19 surveillance testing; and restrict the use of evidence-based mitigation strategies, including masking. Many of these restrictions directly contradict CDC guidance. State actions that prevent the use of established and effective public health tools at the same time as COVID-19 cases increase is a recipe for disaster.

These restrictions undermine the ability of all organizations, including colleges and universities, to operate safely and fully at a time of tremendous unpredictability. Furthermore, these restrictions prohibit higher education institutions from taking responsible and reasonable public health measures and ultimately threaten the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and neighboring communities.

The American College Health Association (ACHA), joined by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned national higher education organizations, urges all government officials, who are charged with the responsibility of protecting the public health, to empower colleges and universities to use every available public health tool to protect campuses and neighboring communities from a COVID-19 surge this fall.

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream

ACPA-College Student Educators International

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Association of the Colleges of Nursing

American College Health Association

American Council on Education

American Dental Education Association

APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"

Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources

Council for Advancement and Support of Education

Council on Social Work Education

EDUCAUSE

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)

National Association of College and University Business Officers

National Association of Colleges and Employers

National Collegiate Athletic Association

Phi Beta Kappa Society