

Covid-19: A statement and resolution

Statement

Covid-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is real and has real consequences. Deaths in the United States due to this new respiratory virus have now amounted to about 1 out of 500 of our friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens. World-wide 4.7 million people have died. The number of people suffering from debilitating “long-Covid” is large.

Vaccines are effective in avoiding and sometimes eliminating diseases. Those of us old enough, remember getting our smallpox and polio vaccines at school or elsewhere. Both of those diseases are now a distant memory due to widespread, mandatory vaccination. Reactions to vaccines are rare and usually minor.

Masks are proven to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and other diseases. Wearing a mask reduces the spread of virus-containing droplets by up to 95%. Further, masks can reduce the inhalation of these droplets by 85%.

Vaccination and mask use is a medical-scientific issue, *not* a political issue. When politicians and politically motivated people become negatively involved in the issue it is typically for political and/or economic reasons, *not* for medical-scientific ones.

Vaccination and mask use *is* a moral and ethical issue. Most people agree that preventing disease and saving lives is both a moral imperative and the right thing to do.

Persons should be allowed to do the morally and ethically right thing. Currently, faculty members may *not* insist on the wearing of masks in the classroom. As the closest contact with students, these teachers should be free to insist that students wear masks, even if that means students are penalized or excluded from class if they do not. The protection afforded by mask use first affects the faculty member and their students, but then radiates to other students, faculty, staff, and the community surrounding the university.

Resolution

Therefore, faculty members, at their own discretion, should manage their own classroom in a way that maximizes their own and their students’ health and, by extension, the health of the broader university and local community. Faculty members should exercise this choice even if disallowed by state law, the Board of Regents, or University of Northern Iowa policy.