To:
Robert Robbins, UArizona President
José Luis Cruz Rivera, NAU President
Michael Crow, ASU President
Members of the Arizona Board of Regents

August 12, 2021

Dear President Robbins, President Cruz Rivera, President Crow, and members of the Arizona Board of Regents,

The members of the Arizona Faculties Council thank you for supporting current science, CDC guidance, and the health of our campus communities by extending mask requirements regardless of vaccination status to indoor spaces where social distancing cannot be maintained, including classrooms. Your efforts to promote the integrity of in-person teaching and learning at our universities help ensure equity in the classroom, allow university educators to focus on delivering the excellent classroom experience our students deserve, and may prevent us from moving again to a fully remote learning environment. We strongly endorse and support the tri-university approach that communicates our common purpose to the public, the Arizona Board of Regents, the Arizona governor, and the Arizona legislature. We are stronger together.

Arizona students and their families have come to expect a university education that puts student success at the center and prepares them for productive futures. After a year of mostly remote teaching, students and faculty anticipate a robust, meaningful, in-person academic year together. Research indicates that students experience a higher quality of learning, success, and satisfaction when they receive an expected, in-person experience with expert faculty and instructors. Your decision to promote the safety of all members of the campus communities supports our long-anticipated return to the classroom and protects the health of our students, faculty, staff, and greater communities from the significant health dangers the SARS-Cov-2 virus- and the Delta variant especially- continue to pose.

The undersigned members of the Arizona Faculties Council convey our strong endorsement of your decision to require masks based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention DC COVID-19 Guidance, which represents the most recent, scientifically vetted approaches to minimizing transmission of Covid-19. In a July 27, 2021 update, CDC experts recommend “universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.” This is particularly important given the high transmission rates of the Delta variant in Arizona, the variable vaccine coverage among our populations, and health system capacities in our respective regions.

As scholars, academics, and scientists, we are bound to stand with evidence and we choose to lead with science. The Arizona Faculties Council urges our university leaders to continue exploring the implementation of proven health measures, including mandatory mitigation testing and vaccination once the most commonly deployed vaccines are federally approved.

Sincerely,
Professor Kate Ellis, AFC Chair and President of the Faculty Senate, Northern Arizona University
Dr. Michael Brewer, Secretary of the Faculty, University of Arizona

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1 For examples, see Berge (2004, 2013); Bunn (2004); Summers et al. (2005)
Dr. Melanie Hingle, Vice Chair of the Faculty, University of Arizona
Dr. Eduardo Pagán, President of the University Senate, Arizona State University
Dr. Jessica Summers, Chair of the Faculty, University of Arizona
Dr. Gioia Woods, Past President of the Faculty Senate, Northern Arizona University