

Marquette to require COVID-19 vaccinations for students

Posted on Tuesday, Jun 8, 2021

Marquette University will require all students to be fully vaccinated by August for the upcoming school year.

In an open letter to current and incoming students, MU President Michael Lovell said the private college's Catholic, Jesuit mission and values call on everyone to "serve the common good," which he said includes following the science on public health.

"A vaccinated student population will allow us to provide you with a richer in-person experience, reduce testing and let you interact more freely across campus," the letter read. "Scientific evidence has shown that vaccines are safe and effective at reducing transmission of the virus."

Students must provide proof of their vaccination status by uploading their vaccination cards to an online portal. But they can request an exemption for medical, religious or personal conviction reasons.

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Those who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 will undergo surveillance testing during their time at the university.

The university also said it will not require faculty and staff to get vaccinated, but that it's highly encouraged.

Rep. Dave Murphy, R-Greenville, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities, told WisPolitics.com he was "deeply disappointed" to hear MU would require COVID-19 vaccines.

"Every individual has the right to determine their own medical treatment," he said

via email. “While I’m pro-vaccination, I’m also pro-freedom. It’s completely inappropriate for a university to make health care decisions for students. Telling a student what to think and do goes against the very idea that universities exist to create independent critical thinkers.”

Republican lawmakers have pushed a series of bills this session that would prohibit businesses and government officials from requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination for customers, employment or government services.

And last week, GOP officials in the state Senate and Assembly held a public hearing on a bill that would ban businesses from discriminating against unvaccinated customers.

Bill author Rep. Gae Magnafici, R-Dresser, said the prohibition as written would also include private colleges like Marquette. She told WisPolitics.com the university’s policy “feels like discrimination” against students who are hesitant to get a shot that only has emergency FDA authorization.

“It’s pretty unfortunate,” she said. “Here they’re making these kids get a vaccine that isn’t even fully approved by the FDA. And how often are they going to test these kids? Weekly? Just to be testing these kids that are asymptomatic, I just don’t think it’s right.”

Magnafici said she expects the AB 303 to be voted out of committee this Wednesday and that she hopes to get a subsequent vote on the Assembly floor.

Meanwhile, UW System President Tommy Thompson has previously said he does not intend to set up such a vaccine mandate on public campuses. A system spokesman today told WisPolitiics.com that “nothing’s changed” on Thompson’s position.

See Lovell’s letter [here](#).