

Future booster eligibility period uncertain, experts say



Clinton Engelberger

STAFF WRITER

Booster shots began making their way across the country last month as Pfizer started administering vaccines to those 65 and older and high-risk groups, but USF Health experts said the expansion of the booster to other age or health groups may not be necessary.

Effectiveness of the third dose doesn't necessarily mean the booster shot will expand much further to the general population, according to College of Public Health professor Jill Roberts. She said boosters are not needed as much for those who have healthier immune systems and have received the initial two doses.

"There is no clinical data to suggest that that's necessary for the other groups. The clinical data we would be looking at is, of course, hospitalizations with severe disease and death," Roberts said.

"The bottom line is, if it's not necessary, we wouldn't do it. It's expensive to produce and distribute them. It's wasting doses that could go to people who haven't had a single-dose kit, and it's potentially risking



Those with major health risks are eligible to receive the booster shot, but USF Health experts said the booster is mostly intended for those with weaker immune systems. ORACLE PHOTO

side effects in folks that didn't get them with the first two doses."

Roberts said one of the only reasons boosters may become available to a more widespread population in the future is if hospitalizations increase.

"The reason that we want to boost the groups that we're boosting right now is not because the vaccine is failing, it's because that person's immune system is failing. So it doesn't make sense to actually boost a person whose immune system is healthy, at least at this time," she said.

"But maybe six months from now we actually do see an increase in hospitalizations among younger individuals, and that would be an indication to us that the vaccine really is starting to fail, which would not be unheard of."

The purpose of booster shots is to remind the immune system of dangerous pathogens that could threaten the immune system, according to Roberts.

"Booster shots are usually given when the immune response to a specific pathogen starts to go away. So over time, our immune system will start to ignore certain things, and we can only make so many cells for so many different pathogens because there's only so much you have in your blood," she said.

Roberts said booster shots differ from other yearly shots, such as the flu vaccine, as boosters are the same shot injected a third time instead of an entirely new one.

"Some people are going to get a little confused about what

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SG advances initiatives to meet Black Student Union's demands



Angela Cordoba Perez

ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

After more than a year since USF's Black Student Union's (BSU) made 10 demands to address the needs of the Black community across campuses, at least half of them will be completed this semester.

Some of the initiatives born from the demands, such as the increase of Black student enrollment, have already been set in motion. Others, like a student lounge in the Marshall Student Center (MSC) and a diversity module for incoming students, will be inaugurated in the upcoming weeks.

The list of demands was compiled at a town hall of Black students and presented to Student Government (SG) and Dean of Students Danielle McDonald on June 5. Since then, SG staff started meeting monthly to discuss how they were going to complete the demands in collaboration with administration and the BSU, with the help of partners like the Institute of Black Lives (IBL) and the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA).

Tampa Lieutenant Governor Kiara Brooks said she is excited to see how the demands have progressed. However, she said meeting the demands is a continuing process as needs and initiatives continue to be identified.

"I do want to highlight the fact that the BSU demands is a working document, we are changing these as we see our needs as a Black student body change," Brooks said. "We don't plan to discontinue these conversations at any point, we definitely do want to continue them and just see how we can further help the Black student body."

Here is a run down of four of the demands where progress has been made:

Provide an Official Black Student Space in the Marshall Student Center

This space, located on the fourth floor of the MSC where the office of study abroad used to be, doesn't have an official name yet but is being referred to as IBL/Student Success Lounge, according to Winston Jones, associate dean of students.

It was expected to open the first week of the semester but with the rise of COVID-19 cases, SG didn't want to congregate people, according to Brooks. Its inauguration was also delayed

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BOOSTER SHOTS

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boosters actually are and what they aren't. When we boost something, we give the exact identical thing we gave last time," she said.

"It has to be the same pathogen, it is not something different. For example, each year we get another flu shot and the shot we get is unique — it is not a booster. It's different from the shot we got the year before."

Booster shots are only available to individuals who received the initial two doses of the Pfizer vaccine, at least six months after the last dose. Moderna is about a month behind due to its initial clinical trials starting later than Pfizer's, according to Roberts. It is expected a booster will become available for those who received Moderna sometime within the next month.

Johnson and Johnson will most likely have its booster shot ready at a much later and unknown date, according to Roberts.

The future of the pandemic, however, could see another wave in infections. Michael Teng, associate professor at the Morsani College of Medicine, said this could be a cause for making the third dose available more broadly.

"With the notion that we've never experienced anything like this, I would say that given that there's still high transmission globally, it's likely that we're going to see another wave," he said. "I think we've gotten to a place where large swathes of our country have given up on non-pharmaceutical interventions like masking and distancing. That's probably going to happen again in a different place where

they have low vaccination rates and low amounts of population.

"However, I think at the end, we're going to have some pretty good immunity to this. For the flu, we require an annual flu shot because it changes the way it looks to our immune system. So, our immune system doesn't quite recognize that as well. The coronaviruses tended not to as much, so I don't think we're going to have annual booster shots like the flu."

Reports on the effectiveness of Pfizer's booster shot have been positive so far, according to Teng, and he said data has shown the booster is efficient in protecting the immune system.

"A lot of data is coming from Israel, where they already have gone through a campaign of boosting their [population] above 60 years old. The time frame is pretty short, but they seem to have better protection than just the two dose series, something like two times better protection," he said.

With the looming threat of a potential new wave in the near future, Roberts said continuing to mask up, social distancing and getting vaccinated are the strongest ways to combat the pandemic.

"We have really good data that came out two days ago showing that the majority of the people who actually are reporting long term COVID symptoms as people are still having breathing problems sometimes six months after having had COVID," she said.

"You want to get vaccinated because long-term COVID sickness is associated with serious disease. If you get vaccinated, you won't get a serious disease."

BSU

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because the space is being remodeled. Once it opens, all students are welcomed, Brooks said.

"The space will mainly not only be a space for students to come and celebrate their culture, but it will also be a space for some light programming and helpful conversations," Brooks said. "We mainly want it to be a space for students to just be able to congregate."

SG is hoping to inaugurate the space during homecoming week. Alexis Roberson, Tampa governor, said the grand opening will be a full celebration with speakers, food and entertainment.

Implement mandatory anti-bias training for all students, faculty, and staff

The anti-bias training for students will be covered by the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging module that was purchased through EVERFI. The module is similar to the ones incoming students have to complete as part of orientation such as the financial literacy course.

"This module is to help to begin to educate our students about diversity, inclusion and belonging so that we have a common baseline, and that we know all students understand and know certain things," Jones said. "Now, whether they believe it. Whether they follow it. Whether they embrace it, that's a different story."

The module will be available within the next few weeks for all students and will be mandatory for incoming students in spring. Jones said the training



While meeting the demands is a continuing process, SG is making progress in at least half of the union's demands. ORACLE PHOTO/LEDA ALVIM

also includes a pre- and post-evaluation, made six weeks after the module is completed, to understand how much students learned from it.

For faculty and staff, the training is still a work in progress because it cannot be mandatory Brooks said. However, with the help of Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, interim vice president for institutional equity, they are coming up with a system to encourage employees to complete it.

Implement mandatory anti-bias and deescalation training for USFPD

Although a mandatory anti-bias and deescalation training has not been implemented, the USF Police Department (USFPD) has a training that was sent to SG after they met to discuss this demand. BSU and other Black student organizations will be discussing the training with SG to make sure it is as "effective as it needs to be," Roberson said. SG also hopes to continue meeting with USFPD once a month to increase the transparency of the relationship between them.

Increase the Black American enrollment rate

USF received a Helios Foundation grant of \$60,000 in 2020 to understand the barriers to Black student enrollment and tackle them, according to Hordge-Freeman. Discussions with the Black Leadership Network, the Office of Admissions and the Anti-Racism Initiative led to a Black student calling campaign where Black faculty and staff were assigned to call students in their fields that they could mentor at USF.

"These efforts, alongside many other efforts by the Office of Admissions, led to an increase of over 78% in the enrollment of first-time-in-college Black students," Hordge-Freeman wrote in an email. "These numbers do not include international students."

Roberson reflected on working through the demands and said it's important to identify issues, communicate them and work on them like BSU did.

"I do think our university is better because of it, because it [shows] that this community has power," she said.

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Gay panic defense doesn't excuse violence

By Brielle Lopez
CORRESPONDENT

The gay panic defense, a pro-hate-crime legal strategy against LGBTQ people, is being fought by Democratic lawmakers in Florida. Sen. Lauren Booker and Rep. Carlos Smith filed a defense against this strategy in the House and Senate on Sept. 28 to outlaw it in the next legislative session.

The defense is defined by the LGBTQ+ Bar as a legal strategy wherein a victim's sexual orientation or gender identity is to blame for the defendant's violence.

This strategy encourages homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, and Florida lawmakers should pass its prohibition.

While not a free-standing criminal defense, it's used to back other defenses. When used in court, it's essentially claiming the victim's sexuality or gender excuses the violence committed against them, devaluing LGBTQ lives.

The gay panic defense is used in one of three ways when attempting to lighten a murder case to manslaughter or justified homicide, according to the LGBTQ+ Bar. This includes defense of diminished capacity, provocation and self-defense.

This defense of diminished capacity is centered around the baseless psychological term "gay panic disorder," which is when someone is thrown into a temporary violent state after a nervous breakdown upon discovering someone's sexual



The gay panic defense needs to be banned in Florida to stop excusing violence perpetuated against LGBTQ individuals.
SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/FLICHR/Ted Eytan

orientation or gender.

This was disproved decades ago, however, in 1973 by the American Psychiatric Association and removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Defense of provocation is when nonviolent sexual advances are argued to be provocative enough to justify murder when the victim making advances is an LGBTQ-identifying individual. Self-defense is also used in tandem with the gay panic defense.

Both of these villainize LGBTQ individuals, making the unjustifiable claim that they're more likely to make violent sexual advances than straight or cisgendered people, and the defendant was therefore in imminent danger.

The self-defense claim was most recently successfully used in a 2018 murder trial regarding the September 2015 murder of Daniel Spencer, who was stabbed

to death by his neighbor, James Miller in Texas.

Miller claimed Spencer had made violent sexual advances toward him, causing Miller to kill him. Despite having no evidence of this, his defense was seen to be valid, resulting in a light sentence of 10 months probation and six months maximum in jail.

There are 16 states that have already banned the use of gay panic defense, the most recent being Maryland on Jan. 13. Florida could be the 17th state to join this movement.

The gay panic defense is based in bigotry, and allows perpetrators of hate crimes to avoid proper consequences. If Florida lawmakers care about the safety of the LGBTQ community, they should prohibit this defense from being used in any Florida court.

Brielle Lopez is a senior majoring in English.

Drop charges against peaceful protesters

By Felicity DeGaetano
CORRESPONDENT

Following the protests after the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, thousands of people took to the streets in Florida to protest police brutality, which led to arrests of multiple individuals who now face charges for their actions.

Jamie Bullock and Chukwudi Uche were accused of striking an officer and carrying a concealed firearm, respectively, during a July 4 protest on North Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa last year, according to the Tampa Bay Times. Bullock allegedly used force against an officer and Uche threw a water bottle then ran to hide in a nearby car, where an officer found him and discovered a firearm in his backpack. Both offenses carry prison time of up to five years.

Their attorneys argued in court in September that police officers were using excessive force against what was an otherwise peaceful protest. The defendants only reacted to officers releasing pepper spray to disperse the crowd.

Bullock and Uche shouldn't be charged for exercising their right to peacefully assemble. Protesters should have the ability to stand their ground and assert their right to speak freely about police brutality and other injustices in America.

Charges of unlawful assembly

for the two individuals were dropped by Hillsborough Circuit Judge Mark Kiser on Sept. 28. Though a small accomplishment, they will still have to fight to remove charges regarding striking an officer and possessing a concealed weapon.

Florida legislators are already making it their job to protect police and dismiss the concerns of protesters.

Following numerous Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the "anti-riot" bill, or HB 1, April 17 which increased criminal penalties toward defacing public property and assaulting police officers during a riot. The law would also penalize any local government wishing to interfere with the way law enforcement contains riots.

HB 1 was blocked soon after being signed into law. U.S. District Judge Mark E. Walker recently prevented enforcement of HB 1 in Florida on Sept. 9, stating the bill is too vague and risks assaulting free speech.

It's worrying that elected officials in Florida immediately sided with law enforcement after these protests. But through supporting Bullock, Uche and encouraging Kiser to drop the charges, we can keep fighting against police brutality and for the rights of Florida citizens.

Felicity DeGaetano is a junior majoring in marketing.

SMU

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seemingly dead play. And he did so against the Mustangs.

However, Saturday was perhaps the first time McClain really showed his age, inexperience and some relative weaknesses, particularly in the passing game.

McClain's struggles started early in the first quarter on USF's second drive of the game. On a third and five from the SMU 34, McClain missed a pass to a wide open Xavier Weaver for what would have been an easy touchdown to cut SMU's lead to three. Although he was hurried by linebacker Turner Coxe, Weaver was at least 5 yards away from the nearest Mustangs defender.

Following an SMU turnover in the second quarter, McClain's struggles continued as on back-to-back plays he overthrew Omarion Dollison and Weaver, respectively, for potential touchdowns.

The second Weaver play was perhaps the most egregious of the three, with busted coverage from SMU and him running all alone over the middle of the field.

McClain's biggest error of the game came on the stroke of halftime with nine seconds left and the Bulls in field goal range. Scott and his coaching staff decided to try one final play to either get field position for a Spencer Shrader field goal or take a shot at the end zone.

Instead of throwing the ball away or running out of bounds before the clock expired, McClain let time run out as he evaded defenders and ultimately fired an incomplete pass into the end zone to finish the half.

"He'll learn from [his mistakes], that's part of the growing pains when you're playing a true freshman quarterback," Scott said. "The goal is not to make the same mistakes that we made

today as we're moving forward."

Early deficits remain an issue

A consistent theme for USF so far this year has been the fact that the Bulls are not a strong first half team. With the exception of their win against FAMU, they have been downright awful in the opening 30 minutes.

Including Saturday's game against SMU, the Bulls have been outscored 107-36 in the first half with the Mustangs being up 17-3



Freshman quarterback Timmy McClain finished 14-of-22 for 233 yards against SMU on Saturday. He also rushed for an additional 25 yards. ORACLE PHOTO/LEDA ALVIM

at halftime.

While an early deficit might not mean much in blowout games like the season opener against NC State, a 45-0 loss, it becomes much more relevant in games such as the ones against Florida and BYU.

In both of those games the Bulls comeback efforts ultimately fell short because they didn't have enough time to make up ground.

In the Sept. 11 loss to the Gators, USF trailed 35-3 at the half but went on to outscore UF 17-7 over the final two quarters. Against BYU, the Cougars jumped out to a 28-6 lead at the break but USF made a game out of it by winning the second half 21-7, once again

too, little too late.

When playing some of the top teams in the nation, falling into a large early deficit is never a recipe for success, even with a strong second half.

Jimmy Horn Jr. with a potential breakout game

One of the bright spots of the loss came in the form of freshman wide receiver Jimmy Horn Jr. who caught five passes for 102 yards, including a 37-yard

reception that proved to be USF's longest offensive play of the day.

Prior to Saturday's game, Horn caught just four balls for a total of 22 yards including two games in which he didn't register any receptions.

Horn, who has been teammates with McClain since their time together at Seminole High School in Sanford, was a three-star recruit coming into college and the No. 128 receiver in the class of 2021.

With a performance he had against SMU, and his established relationship with McClain, Horn could start seeing himself receive a larger role in the offense moving forward.

HYMOWITZ

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purchased a hat to start wearing at the games, and it stuck.

"I think as a joke or something we went on Amazon and got [it]. If you looked at the beginning, I had a blue hat that's basically like the Disney 'Fantasia' hat," Hymowitz said. "It was some \$7 hat we found on Amazon and [we] just got it for fun.

"And then I started wearing that to games ... and then my wife would come to the games and then I think there's a couple pictures of her wearing the hat as well, and that's kind of how it started."

Hymowitz is currently on the second iteration of his hat, a USF-themed piece that was made by his mother. Recently, however, a third was created by a family friend that, according to Hymowitz, looks professionally done.

He plans to break out his new lid against Tulsa on Oct. 16.

Through his passionate support of USF and his work as the USF Wizard, Hymowitz has made some friends along the way, including other big fans and even a few former players.

"I've met so many people, we actually started a new tradition

this year because we're all active on Twitter," he said. "If you see some of the people like Santi and Pickles, and even Jordan Cronkrite and Kayvon Webster when he was here, Matt Grothe ... we all meet up at halftime at the south end zone and take a picture every game."

Hymowitz's love for USF and the community was crafted long before he was an undergraduate student studying economics at the university. He recalled rollerblading on the Tampa campus as a kid and attending football and basketball games with his family growing up.

Now a 33-year-old associate analyst at Citi in Tampa, Hymowitz doesn't plan on stopping anytime soon, as he said his presence at USF is making memories for a whole new generation.

"It's just something to get people involved and the kids love it, it's silly because the kids like it," Hymowitz said. "You've seen me do the faceoff between that one kid with gloves [at the games.] I've met him and his dad a couple times, they're hysterical. ... But, I mean yeah I'll do it until whenever, and I'll do it until we get our [on-campus] stadium, [I'll] do it there, too."



Hymowitz, along with other USF supporters, have started a tradition to meet up at every home USF football game to take a group picture. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

Hymowitz's Feature

USF Wizard enchants fans at home football games



Richard Silva

SPORTS CO-EDITOR

It's 2017. The high-powered USF offense led by Quinton Flowers, Darius Tice and Marquez Valdes-Scantling has guided the Bulls all the way to Houston's 2-yard line.

USF is an undefeated 7-0 and ranked No. 17 in the country. It's fourth and goal, and Flowers takes the snap, hands the ball to D'Ernest Johnson, and the future Cleveland Brown plunges into

the end zone to give the Bulls an early lead.

Just like that, in section 121, the USF Wizard was born.

"When it happened ... the camera guy just happened to see me [gesturing] and started [recording] it," Adam Hymowitz, also known as the USF Wizard, said. "And now we just make eye contact when we're ready to go.

"It's morphed into this whole thing about how he will get a call from his people and he'll look at me and he'll point to his ears, and to me [that signals] the TV people want me to be on the screen, and then he'll point to me. We have a whole hand gesture thing, it's kind of funny."

Hymowitz's act is hard to miss while attending USF football games. After a big play or in an

exciting moment, there's a good chance he's on the jumbotron doing his signature stare and finger wiggling in the direction of the camera with a wizard hat sitting on his head.

USF class of 2011 graduate and longtime Tampa resident, Hymowitz has become a local celebrity since that Johnson touchdown in 2017.

"I get noticed pretty frequently," he said. "I was at the soccer game ... and people tend to know who I am."

In its infancy, his alter ego wasn't exactly a wizard like it is today, as Hymowitz's signature hat wasn't even part of the look yet.

The headgear didn't come into play until Hymowitz, along with his then girlfriend and now wife,



Adam Hymowitz, also known as the "USF Wizard," has become a familiar sight for fans attending USF football games. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

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SMU Takeaways

Takeaways: McClain shows room for growth, Bulls fall behind early against SMU



Francisco Rosa

SPORTS CO-EDITOR

It was an afternoon filled with miscues for the USF football team during its blowout 41-17 loss to SMU on Saturday.

Playing against one of the most explosive offenses in the country, the Bulls failed to seize multiple opportunities that would have kept the game competitive and possibly even made the Mustangs sweat a bit.

Whether it was costly

and untimely penalties, time mismanagement or the inexperience of freshman quarterback Timmy McClain showing, USF found itself incapable of taking advantage of its brightest moments against one of the top teams in the conference.

McClain, who was lauded for his gritty performance against BYU on Sept. 25, demonstrated

some of the growing pains that come with starting a true freshman quarterback while still flashing some of the talent that's caught the attention of coach Jeff Scott and Bulls fans over the last few weeks.

Here's what we learned from the Bulls' performance against the Mustangs:

McClain has room to grow

Over his first three starts for USF, McClain has made one thing perfectly clear — he's the most electric quarterback USF has seen since Quinton Flowers last suited up for the Bulls in 2017.

On any given play, he has the type of ability to make any throw in the book, use his legs to gain big chunks of yards or elude multiple would-be tacklers to salvage a

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