



September 1, 2009

Dear Faculty:

As you are doubtless aware, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and other global health organizations are expecting widespread illness resulting from the spread of the H1N1 virus, or Swine Flu during the coming weeks and months. Indeed, institutions of higher education that began classes in the past two weeks are already reporting large numbers of cases of the virus on their campuses. At this time, it is not yet clear how and when the outbreak will be affected by a vaccine, or whether the vaccine will be commonly available in time to make a difference this fall semester. The latter seems unlikely.

It is thus important that we prepare for the pandemic flu's impact on our institution. In particular, it is imperative that we do everything we can to limit the spread of the flu on the campus. In this context, I urge you to consider the following issues.

H1N1 and the Classroom

Students who have the flu should not come to class. If students inform you that they have the flu, please send them home. If they are displaying flu-like symptoms—fever plus cough and sore throat, and possibly runny nose, body aches, chills, fatigue (and of course more serious symptoms, which you are unlikely to witness, like vomiting and diarrhea), it is appropriate to ask students about these observable symptoms and ask that they return home.

In most cases, the CDC is not advising the use of facemasks, with the exception of persons who are particularly at risk of contracting the flu. Students should be allowed to wear facemasks in classes if they are trying to avoid becoming ill; under no circumstances should anyone who is ill be allowed to justify class attendance through the use of the facemask.

The CDC is recommending that students with the virus return home or be isolated for at least a week; clearly such students will miss as many as four class sessions per course or more. We need to be prepared to deal with that eventuality.

Student Attendance and the H1N1

It is essential that class attendance policies be made sufficiently flexible to encourage students who are ill to stay home until they are no longer contagious (at least 24 hours after cessation of fever). For the health of our students, faculty and staff, I strongly urge you to relax your usual policies *if the spread of the virus makes it necessary*. You should be prepared to do the following:

- Allow more absences than usual (requiring a doctor's note is not advised by the CDC, since doctors' offices are likely to be extremely busy), basing final grades more heavily on work completed than on seat-time;
- Allow students to turn in as many assignments as possible by email;
- Consider shifting some portions of the course online as needed (for example, threaded discussions that may be conducted either through WebCT or even through email exchanges using "reply to all," alternative assignments that may be completed online such as blogs, wikis, web readings, easily accessible films and videos, etc.);
- Be prepared to grant students an "Incomplete" if their illnesses occur near or at the end of the semester and/or during the final exam period;
- In a worst-case scenario, be prepared to suspend and then restart a semester, or to grade students on work completed up to the point of suspension, if the institution closes at or near the end of the semester (see "Suspension of Operations," below).

Please keep in mind that this is the viral equivalent of a 100-year flood; we are unlikely to see anything like it again in our lifetime. While there may be the occasional student who tries to take advantage of this more "relaxed" situation, I would urge you, this year, to think of the welfare of the many over our natural penchant for preventing rogue students from missing classes without a valid excuse.

Faculty Illness

If you, as a faculty member, become ill with the flu, you should not come to class until 24 hours after your fever lifts. Please take note of the possibility that you will miss more than one week of class. I thus recommend that you consider contingency plans for this eventuality, including alternative (especially online) activities and assignments, guest lecturers, and so forth. If you do contract the flu, please notify your department chair and my office, as well as your students.

Suspension of Operations, Including Classes

While it is highly unlikely, it is possible that the flu could cause sufficient numbers of faculty and staff to be absent to require the temporary suspension of operations. Such a decision would be made by the senior administration, which will be closely monitoring the H1N1 throughout the academic year. If such an event were to occur, faculty would be notified through email and the

web site, as well as local media (much as is done in the event of severe weather). The institution would reopen as soon as possible, and adjustments to the academic calendar and exam schedule would be made as needed. It is impossible to predict whether, and how, such an eventuality might play out. We can only ask faculty to be aware of the virus's progress (including reporting large numbers of student absences to the VPAA), check their email regularly, and commit themselves to the kind of flexibility and generosity of spirit that will be needed get the institution and its stakeholders through the pandemic.

Of course, this brief memorandum cannot cover all of the personal and medical issues that might arise in connection with the H1N1 virus. Please note that our response will evolve over time, and that it is thus subject to frequent revision as the academic year advances. For more information, I encourage you to consult the following links:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/higheredguidance.pdf>

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean E. de la Motte". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Dean E. de la Motte, VPAA