

Suggestions for planning for and responding to the H1N1 flu outbreak

As a follow up to the Provost's email regarding planning for a high incidence of H1N1 among students, faculty and staff and the potential for this to disrupt instructional activities, we recently discussed College recommendations for addressing this situation. Herewith is a summary of our discussion:

- Social-distancing and instruction are inherently at odds; therefore, we need to balance educational goals with minimizing the risk of virus spread.
- There is no formula for handling the situation; professors have academic freedom in presenting their courses. However, we should all be working to ensure that illness does not adversely affect the learning outcome (or student transcripts).
- Planning and contingency plans should be discussed in a faculty meeting.
- Specific tactics include but are clearly not limited to the following:
 - Faculty should make every effort to communicate to students that they will not be penalized for staying away from class when they are not feeling well. Be as specific as possible in explaining how they can make up for missed assignments, quizzes or exams. Give them the opportunity to make up for the missed work/exam or the opportunity to drop their lowest quiz/exam.
 - Do not ask for notes from their doctors/Gannett in order for them to be eligible for make-up opportunities. Gannett will not issue notes. A few students might game the system and claim to be sick in order to buy more time for studying, but we will have to trust the students to be honest. We need to make sure that infected students don't come to class.
 - For large courses, plan with graduate and undergraduate TAs what to do if several become sick.
 - Faculty can cover each other's absences in courses if able.
 - To compensate for potential absences and delays in students' ability to catch up, provide additional assessments such as an added exam (and drop the lowest grade) or add a term paper.
 - Provide ample opportunity for making up exams and be flexible on due dates for assignments when students indicate they are or have been sick.
 - Minimize outside-of-class group projects and substitute in-class group discussions about various topics so that student absence does not adversely affect other students.
 - Relax timing of the S/U policy for those courses that are already approved as S/U option. Professors can notify the CALS Registrar's Office for relaxation of the S/U change date, so that students can request a switch from a letter grade to the S/U grade later in the semester. This option could be done on a case-by-case basis for individual students. At any time (even multiple times) during the semester, instructors (not students) may provide the Registrar's Office with a list of students for whom they wish the grade option to be changed. The CALS Registrar's Office will soon provide instructions on the process, which will likely be done in DUST.
 - For courses that are not already approved for S/U credit, an instructor may notify the CALS Registrar's Office to have a course designated for S/U or Letter

optional grading so students may use that designation. However, if this change is made, the opportunity to switch to S/U must be made available to all students in the course. This change in grade option for the course will be temporary for the 2009-10 academic year. If the request is for a permanent change, a course proposal will need to be submitted for consideration by the CALS Curriculum Committee.

- Post outlines and/or lecture notes on Blackboard.
- One instructor in Education offered the following:
 - I will start video recording each lecture starting tomorrow. This is a pretty simple solution where I simply have my laptop record a new video right in QuickTime using the laptop's camera and microphone - amazingly easy. This will record me and the screen behind me with the slides. After class I will post this to the website, but require a password to access the video. If a student misses class due to an illness (I trust they are honest) I will send a password to access the lecture. I consulted with my 4 undergrad TAs on this - about my concern for lack of attendance if I made the video available to all - and we all agreed the password restriction is wise.
- Students should be encouraged to inform the instructor via email if they are sick. All sick students are asked to stay home, and submit due work via email. Instructors should not request documentation of illness from students.
- Keep a large bottle of hand sanitizer where students enter the room. Encourage everyone to use it when they come in, or after they sneeze or cough into their hands.
- More washing of tabletops and desktops to decrease spread of germs.
- Encourage students to thoroughly wash and dry hands before touching commonly-used surfaces (doorknobs, etc.). See <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS98142+14-Sep-2009+BW20090914>
- Make numerous announcements about H1N1 consistent with the university guidance.
- Faculty should have a clear plan for what to do if they become ill. Coming to class while sick is just as bad an idea for faculty as it is for the students. Stay home if you get flu symptoms. Faculty should ensure that their assistant, TAs, or others are able to notify their students if they have to cancel class. One idea to consider: Arrange with a faculty colleague, postdoc or TA to fill in at short notice if you become sick. One way to plan for this would be to have three specific lectures that would not be a stretch for your substitute, and ask your substitute to be ready to step in with short notice and give the lectures out of sequence. Make sure your substitute has access to your notes and/or powerpoints. An alternative is to make your lecture notes and slides available to the students online and hold one or two evening sessions to answer questions on the missed lectures. You could also take it as an opportunity to develop some active learning tools (to make up for the missed lectures).
- Make sure that your lab members understand that it is better for them to stay home if they contract the flu.

- If you are hosting visitors, please plan for dealing with their possible concerns about coming to Cornell and the possibility that they will become ill while they are visiting. Please go to <http://www.cornell.edu/emergency/flu/posters/events-update.cfm> to view or download a poster from Gannett with useful information.