

Faculty and Staff Preparation for the H1N1 Season

With reports that the H1N1 flu virus has been detected on 73% of the nation's college campuses, it is only a matter of time before the illness makes its way to Wabash. To date we have had no confirmed cases of the flu reported. The College is preparing for the outbreak and calibrating the appropriate response when it arrives.

With the help of the Safety Committee's Emergency Planning group, we have drawn up a list of action steps intended to reduce the impact of the virus as it relates to classroom teaching and instruction as well as the normal operations of offices across the College. What are we doing and what measures should we take as we enter the flu season? Our student population is one of the highest at-risk groups for H1N1. Much of what follows is good, preventative common sense. Messages will be aimed repeatedly at students to prompt their best self-care. Faculty and staff can help in the following ways:

1. Personal Hygiene. Personal hygiene is the single-most important preventative measure. Encourage all students to keep their hands away from eyes, nose, and mouth; to cough into the crook of the elbow; to sneeze into tissues; and to keep common areas and equipment clean after use. Tissues, hand sanitizers, and disinfectant wipes will soon be found in classrooms, labs, and offices across the campus. Encourage students in class and as you encounter them in their ESH work settings and elsewhere to use them. Repeat those messages frequently with students.
2. Cleaning. Campus Services staff are increasing the sanitizing of public areas, including classroom, living units, and the Allen Center. Where possible, please wipe down classroom equipment and common areas (computer keyboards, hand-held devices, counter tops, telephones, etc.) after you or students use it.
3. Vaccinations. Health Services encourages all students to be vaccinated for the seasonal flu and will identify and contact students who are a higher risk due to existing health conditions to encourage vaccination against H1N1. Traditionally, students have not taken advantage of the opportunity to receive vaccines; faculty and staff are asked to encourage students to seek vaccinations when they become available. The College is a priority recipient of both vaccines, which are expected to arrive on campus in late October. It is important to receive **both** the seasonal vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine, particularly for those who are at risk. The Health Services office will inform the community when the vaccines are available.
4. Illness and Classroom Management.
 - a. Communication. The Public Affairs office will coordinate communication across campus. When the first case is confirmed, the campus will be immediately informed. A communication will then go out to our students' families. Information will be posted on the College's website.
 - b. Ill Student Management. Students with flu symptoms will be encouraged to contact the Health Center. Students with the flu will either be sent home (where practical) or isolated from other students. Where possible, each living unit will identify a space where sick students can be isolated. Should the volume of ill students exceed those spaces, other locations across campus (such as the Hays home on Crawford Street) will

be used to house the greater numbers. Cots and other provisions are being readied. Food service will deliver food to living units. Additional medical staff will be added as needed. We will monitor developments closely to determine if additional steps, such as closure of the College, are warranted.

- c. Faculty and Staff Preparation. Faculty should encourage ill students **not** to attend class. Staff members who supervise student workers should encourage sick students **not** to come to work. Faculty and staff should advise sick students to contact the Health Center and follow guidelines posted on the College's website.

Faculty are asked to adjust class absence policies and to make provisions for allowing quizzes, tests, written work, and other course obligations to be made up in alternative ways. This is a highly unusual situation. Faculty may be called upon to conduct classes in unprecedented ways. Faculty should be prepared to hold classes with a significant proportion of students absent at any one time. Faculty should develop contingency class plans and inform students about the ways they will communicate with them. Make maximum use of email to communicate with students and to allow submission of work through Moodle or by other electronic means to diminish the amount of interpersonal contact once the flu arrives. ESH worker supervisors should develop contingency plans for student absences. Please develop your individual plans now and communicate those plans in writing to your classes or student workers. As for faculty and staff illness, should you develop symptoms do **not** come to work or hold classes. Err on the side of caution and exercise common sense. Please communicate electronically with your department chair or supervisor.

Working with the Montgomery County Health Department, we will monitor H1N1 presence and impact on campus and in the wider community. We will communicate information when we have it. And we will take the appropriate institutional decisions as the situation demands. Please check the College website for information updates.