

To: Ohio University Faculty

From: Pam Benoit, Executive Vice President and Provost
Joe McLaughlin, Chair, Faculty Senate

Re: H1N1 Faculty Contingency Planning

Date: September 1, 2009

In accord with [CDC recommendations](#), Ohio University has developed a [contingency plan](#) to be used in the event of an outbreak of H1N1 influenza on one or more of our campuses. Updates to the plan are anticipated as the academic year progresses.

Ohio University's plan covers all members of the Ohio University community, but the close quarters in which many of our students live and their level of social interaction make them a population that requires heightened vigilance.

Students have begun returning to universities across the country, and suspected and confirmed cases of H1N1 are being reported. As we are unable to predict the degree to which our campuses may be affected, all of us need to work together to lessen the chances of a severe influenza outbreak among our students. Consequently, as you complete work on your courses and finalize your syllabi, we request that you give some thought to the unique challenges that could develop in the wake of an influenza outbreak.

At this point, we are encouraging faculty to think about how to meet those challenges. If we experience a significant outbreak, we will need to provide specific instructions concerning teaching and research matters, but such measures would be developed in partnership with Faculty Senate, the Deans, and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Your assistance in helping the university to prepare for a set of unknowable and difficult circumstances is appreciated.

Please consider the following:

- Attendance policies may need to be adjusted. Ordinarily, students who feel unwell may elect to attend class particularly if their symptoms are mild. During the upcoming academic year, the CDC is advising universities to instruct students not to attend class if they experience symptoms such as fever, a cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. They will be encouraged instead to limit contact with others.

If their symptoms persist, students will be advised to ask their parents to take them home or to seek assistance from Student Health Services so that they can be cared for in a setting that does not put others at risk. Isolating those who have contracted the virus is the best defense against a widespread infection.

The strategy of isolation presents problems when it comes to students being able to obtain verification of a medical absence. If you have an attendance policy, please consider how you might make adjustments if influenza begins to appear on campus. Students need to know that they will not be penalized if they act responsibly.

- As you may experience higher than normal absences, consider planning now for how you can best help students make up for lost time.
- You may want to consider inserting some language into your syllabus that lets students know that in the case of an emergency such as a severe outbreak of influenza, you may be obliged to make changes to course content, assignments, or other substantive elements of the class.

Purdue University provided this example to its faculty: “In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised [quarter] calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course. [Provide instructions on how you will communicate—Blackboard, faculty web page, or email].”

- Faculty and staff who experience influenza symptoms or have family members who exhibit symptoms will be encouraged not to come to work. You may already have a school or departmental plan on how to cover the teaching responsibilities of faculty who call in sick, but you might consider expanding it to cover the contingency of having more than one instructor absent at the same time. Likewise planning for the absence of critical staff would be advisable.
- If it becomes necessary to protect the health of our students, faculty, and staff, the university may need to suspend classes and other activities on some campuses. Consider how you might be able to use technology to help your students continue to master the material in your course. Duke University has a useful website on how to [“Flu-Proof”](#) courses.
- Faculty who have vital facilities or research work that could be affected by a decision to ask staff and faculty to remain at home need to review their contingency protocols and emergency plans.
- Make a point of keeping informed about influenza-related developments on your campus and be familiar with the resources that exist to help students and their parents. At this time, regular communication on the status of H1N1 influenza as it affects Ohio University will be posted on the university's [emergency information page](#). Significant or time-sensitive changes to status will result in e-mail and/or *Outlook* communications as warranted. If you have not signed up to receive [emergency text messages](#), please consider doing so and encourage your students and colleagues to do likewise.

In addition to the CDC recommendations, you may want to look at some recent articles that provide information about how influenza planning is proceeding at other institutions:

“Teaching the Quarantined,” August 19, 2009 <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/08/19/flu>

“H1N1 Scenarios,” August 21, 2009 <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/08/21/h1n1>

“Colleges Get Ready for Swine Flu,” August 20, 2009 <http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Get-Ready-for-Swin/48144/>