Recommendations for faculty to manage the impact of H1N1 flu on students and instruction

Dear Colleagues,

The flu season has begun, and cases of seasonal flu and the H1N1 strain (swine flu) are on the rise. The NIH estimates that more than 33% of the U.S. population may become infected with H1N1 swine flu, in contrast to a typical year in which seasonal flu infects 5 to 20% of Americans. The good news is that while H1N1 spreads quickly, the vast majority of people who are otherwise healthy recover just as they would from the seasonal flu.

UCLA faculty and administrators should be aware of recent written advice provided to students by Chancellor Block (http://chancellor.ucla.edu/updates/message-regarding-flu-caused-by-h1n1-virus) and by the UCLA Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center (http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/H1N1.html), based on recommendations provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In particular, students are being advised by the Ashe Center to assess their symptoms (http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/_doc/H1N1_Screening_Questionnaire.pdf), and to not come to class until they are without a fever above 100 °F for at least 24 hours or more.

Faculty should plan for the possibility that large numbers of students in their classes and research groups may contract the flu. Recommendations for dealing with these situations are as follows:

1. **Be proactive and develop a plan.** Faculty should consider how their policies about test-taking, laboratory and practicum activities may need to be adjusted to accommodate large-scale student absences due to illness

   - “Late policies” for written assignments and projects may warrant adjustment in light of absenteeism due to illness.
   - Alternative testing strategies should be considered for students who follow the University recommendations and miss an examination. See below for ways to verify illness.
   - Consider developing policies for make-up assignments and/or alternative times for laboratory and practicum activities in advance of the epidemic, e.g., by designating alternative or additional laboratory periods.
   - If it is absolutely required that ill students take exams at posted times, or if ill students elect to do so, faculty should attempt to seat students at least 6 feet
apart. Clearly the difficulties in accomplishing this make it preferable for ill students to stay at home and for instructors to use alternative measures.

- Please contact the Office of Instructional Development if you would like to explore options such as pod-casting to provide students remote access to lectures or seminars.
- If implementing these recommendations would require additional resources, department chairs and faculty should develop a plan and consult their Dean as quickly as possible.

2. **Understand your options for verifying illness.** Students may or may not obtain a signed written verification of illness for their instructors, available at the Ashe Center website ([http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/H1N1.html](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/H1N1.html)).

- While verifications are reviewed by clinicians at the Ashe Center, students who are mildly to moderately ill are encouraged to NOT report there. Instead, they are being encouraged to isolate themselves from others, rest and treat their symptoms.
- An Ashe Center health care provider who is asked to provide verification of illness may not have actually examined and evaluated the student. This is consistent with the University’s policy. Faculty should be aware of the way in which such verifications are obtained and signed.

3. **Be aware of flu symptoms and the recommended procedures at UCLA.**

- Symptoms of influenza include fever above 100 °F, cough and chills.
- Influenza is a respiratory illness. Flu is easily spread by coughing and sneezing. The CDC has disseminated a “Cover the Cough” poster that is particularly helpful in reducing the spread of illness ([http://www.cdc.gov/flu/images/CoverCgh-hep-view.gif](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/images/CoverCgh-hep-view.gif)). Frequent hand-washing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer is also important.
- With mild to moderate symptoms, students are encouraged to self-treat and NOT to report to the Ashe Center or Medical Center.
- If students are severely ill, they are encouraged to report to the Ashe Center or UCLA Medical Center ER for medical evaluation and treatment. The Ashe Center has a Self-Screening Questionnaire that is helpful for everyone ([http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/_doc/H1N1_Screening_Questionnaire.pdf](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/_doc/H1N1_Screening_Questionnaire.pdf)).

Please consult the Ashe Center website ([http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu/)) or the UCLA H1N1 website ([http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/swine-flu.aspx](http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/swine-flu.aspx)) for further information and updates. We understand the problems you will face in handling this pandemic and thank you for your efforts to minimize the impact of the flu outbreak on our students.
Sincerely,

Representatives from the UCLA Campus H1N1 Task Force:
  Prof. Dorothy Wiley, School of Nursing
  Prof. Ann Karagozian, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering and Academic Senate
  Vice-Chair/Chair Elect
  Dr. Jo Ann Dawson, Executive Director, Ashe Student Health & Wellness Center