

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back for a new academic year. Along with the excitement and energy that a new year brings, this year also brings the potential challenges of the H1N1 flu (formerly called swine flu). The current assessment by public health officials is that the current level of H1N1 illness is comparable in severity to that of a normal flu season, and that a vaccine may be available later this fall. However, we should be prepared in case the flu is more widespread or more severe than this assessment.

Information about the flu can be found online at: <http://www.pitt.edu/swine-flu/>. Associate Vice Chancellor Ron Frisch also sent a message to all faculty and staff alerting them to the symptoms of H1N1 and precautions to take should you become ill. I will not repeat that information here, except to ask that ***if you become ill, please stay home***. The CDC recommends isolation for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever.

The purpose of this communication is to ask that you consider in advance how you will address a situation in which large numbers of your students are ill and cannot attend class for three to five days. In particular, I ask that you:

- Consider making some of your course materials available online if you have not already done so. A large fraction of instructors already make their course materials available through Blackboard and the Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education (CIDDE) is ready to assist others gain access to the system. To request that your course be set up in Blackboard, please call the Faculty Lab at 412-648-2832 or complete the course request form on the web at <http://www.cidde.pitt.edu/main/courserequest.html>
- Consider how you will answer student inquiries about making up work, receiving incomplete (G) grades, or missing class when participation is an important component of the course. Since there may be a larger number of these requests than usual, and because we do not want people attending class when they are contagious, it is important to have a plan in place that treats students equitably and does not pressure them to attend class when they are ill. It is currently anticipated that most students with flu-like illness will not need to be seen by a doctor, and are being advised to self-isolate by avoiding classes and social events and to consider going home to the care of their families. It is important that you know Student Health Services may not be issuing excuses for students who become ill with the flu.

Thanks for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,
Patricia Beeson
Vice Provost for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies