

Office of the Provost and
Vice President for Academic Affairs

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September 16, 2009

Dear Colleague:

We write to provide you with updated information about H1N1 influenza and to ask your assistance in coordinating our response to outbreaks of this virus on our campus.

Fortunately, H1N1 is relatively mild and our campus health center and service providers are very well prepared for it. However, incidents of H1N1 and seasonal flu are currently rising in our state and we expect flu-related disruptions and concerns to begin with freshman orientation and to remain with us for much of the term. Consequently, we ask that you help us communicate a consistent set of messages about H1N1 and that you prepare for flu-related disruptions in your classrooms.

We are under a very rare set of circumstances this term. These flues will arrive during a period of economic difficulty for the university, our students and their families. Large numbers of course withdrawals would disrupt departmental scheduling and our students' degree plans, creating a raft of future registration difficulties while extending time-to-degree. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that we encourage practices that minimize the spread of these viruses and that course delivery continues so that students may persist in earning course credit.

These objectives are closely related: if students believe their absences will jeopardize their course standing they will either come to class sick or withdraw. Consequently, we ask

1. That you advise students with flu-related absences **not** to return to class until they are fever-free without medication for 24 hours.
2. That you advise students with flu-related absences to **remain** registered.
3. That you do all that you can to **accommodate student absences** and to **prepare for the possibility of your own illness**.

To support your efforts, the university has adopted this interim attendance guidance **for Fall term only**:

As long as absence from class does not exceed seven consecutive weekdays, instructors are encouraged to provide reasonable accommodation for a student who self-reports influenza-like illness. Because the WWU Health Center and local physicians have warned that they do not expect to have time to provide written medical excuses for students with the flu, student self-reports should be accepted. The instructor may wish to require the student to submit a written explanation of the absence by email. Instructors are also encouraged to include a statement of their class absence requirements in their syllabi.

Accommodating absences and communicating with students if unanticipated circumstances arise may be easiest when faculty use web-based instructional resources, like Blackboard. In addition ATUS can provide automated digital recordings of lectures and narrated Power Point presentations, recorded in your classroom or office via a USB microphone they can provide. These and other ATUS-supported resources for making instructional preparations for flu-related absences will be described in a following e-mail and may be viewed at <http://west.wvu.edu/atus/teaching/beprepared.shtml>.

Considering the possibility of many students absent for a week of classes, faculty may also wish to consider alternate projects or make-up assignments, and library reserve resources (such as additional text books) to help students cover the content of material missed in class. More traditionally, we urge you to make arrangements with a colleague or graduate student who may be able to substitute for you if you contract the virus.

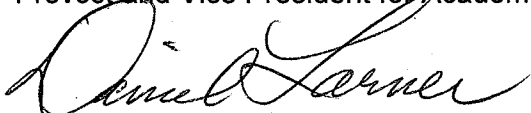
Please take precautionary steps to keep yourself healthy and follow the guidance being given to all Western employees to stay home if you become ill. If you become ill, we ask that you contact your department chair as soon as possible to discuss plans for covering your classes and assistance you might need in doing so. Department chairs are to keep deans abreast of any situations in which departments may need their help.

Although this flu season is certain to be a significant inconvenience in the short term, we hope the consequences are no more severe than that for you and your students. There will be many ways in which all of us may need to be flexible but we hope with creativity and solidarity we can minimize the negative impacts of this illness on the achievement of students' long term educational goals and the quality they expect from Western.

Cordially,



Catherine A. Riordan,
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs



Daniel M. Lerner, President, Faculty Senate



Steven Garfinkle, President, UFWW