

To: Ramapo College Faculty
From: Beth Barnett, Provost
RE: H1N1 Virus
Date: 14 September 2009

Today's Daily Digest contains an update from Health Services on the H1N1 virus (Swine Flu). I encourage you to review this message and additional information on the Emergency Preparedness Website found at:

<http://www.Ramapo.edu/emergency/h1n1.html>

The Emergency Preparedness Committee has asked that we plan proactive measures to mitigate how a severe flu season would impact continuity in the academic units. The Committee is in the process of developing and approving a Pandemic Response Plan but needs assistance from the academic community. I have recommended the addition of faculty to the Committee and am asking Faculty Assembly to consider and distribute recommendations about absences policies (faculty and students) and flexible methods of meeting course requirements and deadlines. Information Technology Services (ITS) will be asked to prepare for an increase in demand for Moodle and other internet services if the College experiences an outbreak. I also ask that additional academic continuity planning (e.g., arranging for substitute instructors, establishing or updating policies for missed exams or late projects) occur at the unit and convening group levels.

As of today, no cases of H1N1 flue virus have been reported at Ramapo College.

The following items are presented as information and as issues to include in unit discussions. They are offered with the recognition that units, convening groups, and individual courses may be impacted differently, so actions appropriate for one may not apply to all.

Absences

- Local and national health authorities are emphasizing that social distancing (i.e., public health practice of encouraging people to keep their physical distance from each other during disease outbreaks in order to slow the spread of infection) is critical to protect vulnerable populations.
- If illness occurs with fever, stay home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever, or signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If H1N1 is suspected, do not visit your health care provider unless you are experiencing flu-like symptoms AND you have an underlying health condition (pregnancy, asthma, diabetes, undergoing chemotherapy, etc.), OR your condition

worsens. To prevent the spread of illness, **health authorities are discouraging visits to health facilities to request a doctor's note to document absence.** The campus needs to operate within this parameter.

- Faculty are in the best position to communicate the need for staying home when ill in order to limit spread of the virus. This practice applies to students, to faculty and to staff. Faculty are urged to create a more flexible absence policy than usual, should we experience an H1N1 outbreak.
- As a faculty member, you should know that observations of a student's behavior are not protected by FERPA. If you see a student who exhibits symptoms of influenza-like illness (ILI) and is still attending class, you may contact Health Services (201 684-7536) for guidance on what to do, and you may also share the information with others who have a legitimate reason to know. Names of ill students should never be released to the media, parents of other students, members of the general public, etc. Only the appropriate personnel should be contacting parents or other relatives of students.
- Faculty and staff should communicate with their Deans as soon as possible if they become ill and should stay away from campus until they are recovered.

Academic Continuity

- There is a high probability that many faculty members and students will contract the H1N1 flu, with several waves of absences possibly occurring.
- How will a significant number of absences by faculty, staff, and students be handled? Faculty, conveners, and deans need to plan now for continuity of instruction if we experience a local outbreak.
- Is your class posted on Moodle or do you have some alternative way to communicate with all your students?
- Is there someone else who could cover your class if you're out? Deans and conveners should have plans for their unit to respond to significant faculty absences to include who can cover which courses for whom.
- Are semester reading assignments and class projects posted? Can you send or post lecture notes to students who have to miss due to illness?
- Are there alternate projects that students could do if they are ill? Which assignments could, if necessary, be handled by Internet or phone if/when health authorities recommend strong protocols for social distancing?
- What options are available for completing a course for students or faculty who become ill and miss significant parts of the semester? How will you assess

performance and assign grades for these students who may miss exams, projects, deadlines, etc.? Unit-level planning could be very useful for these contingencies.

- Have you planned for what would need to happen if you were not available to direct a research project for a significant period of time?

I am strongly urging you to engage in active discussion and serious planning about a number of "what if?" questions. Let us hope that this proves to be a situation where the best laid plans are never needed. If the need should arise, however, the College will keep you informed of any pertinent news or decisions via the Emergency Preparedness page at

<http://www.Ramapo.edu/emergency/h1n1.html>

or the Student Health Center Web site at

<http://www.Ramapo.edu/student/health/index.html>

More info regarding the CDC's recommendations to higher education can be found at

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov> .