

Northeastern University

Office of the Provost

To: Faculty and Staff

From: Mary Loeffelholz, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Date: August 26, 2009

Re: H1N1 Faculty Guidelines and Resources

CC: Joseph Aoun, President

Stephen Director, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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As the fall semester commences, you are probably aware that seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus (formerly known as Swine Flu) remain a great concern throughout the nation. Northeastern has been actively working with the Boston Public Health Commission, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to plan for this flu season and reduce the spread of H1N1 virus in our community.

Preventing the spread of influenza

The symptoms of the H1N1 virus are similar to those of seasonal influenza, which include fever, sore throat, lethargy, lack of appetite, and coughing. Prevention remains the simplest and strongest measure to combat the spread of both seasonal influenza and the H1N1 virus. Public health officials and University Health and Counseling Services (UHCS) recommend 4 main ways you may keep from getting sick with the flu or transmitting influenza to others.

1. We strongly encourage that all students, faculty, and staff receive the seasonal influenza vaccine unless otherwise advised by your healthcare provider. UHCS will be hosting various influenza clinics in the fall for students and will provide information about other influenza clinics in the Boston area. The seasonal influenza vaccine will be available in September

this year with no supply concerns. UHCS is also working with local health officials in planning for the distribution of the H1N1 vaccine for priority groups.

2. Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.

4. If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). If you are taking fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen), be aware that they may mask continuing influenza symptoms. Staying away from others while you are sick can prevent others from getting sick too. Ask a roommate, friend, or family member to check up on you and to bring you food and supplies if needed.

The UHCS website (<http://www.northeastern.edu/uhcs/>) provides current information on prevention, symptoms, care, and community updates on the H1N1 virus and seasonal influenza. The website will announce the dates, times, and sites of UHCS influenza clinics and includes more information on steps to take if you do become ill with influenza.

Preparing for interruption of classroom instruction for an unusually large number of students because of widespread influenza infection

Appropriate self-isolation (as detailed above) is critical for containment of the H1N1 virus, as well as the viruses associated with seasonal influenza. It is essential that absence from class caused by such self-isolating does not negatively impact student success in course work. In these circumstances, faculty members must be prepared to alter course policies that would penalize students for short-term absence due to influenza. Faculty members must be prepared to provide course material missed because of influenza, including make-up assignments and examinations.

The UHCS does not provide documentation for illness, and other medical offices do not consistently provide such documentation. We therefore recommend that students themselves draft and sign absence notes to be provided to their instructors upon their return to class. Integrity in this process is an expectation of the Northeastern Academic Integrity Policy.

The Blackboard course management system is available to provide course materials to students who are absent from class. Blackboard also has announcement and email capability, with email addresses for the entire class contained in each course site. These features of Blackboard will be critical if faculty members themselves become ill and must alter class meeting plans. The Information Services and Education Technology Center web sites provide information on how to use Blackboard; basic features of Blackboard are covered on the IS site and more advanced features on the EdTech site. Both groups are also willing to provide additional information if needed. Audio equipment for recording lectures is available from Information Services, should faculty wish to use that resource. The EdTech Center web site also contains information about other approaches to online delivery of educational materials.

Additionally, faculty and students should be aware that various types of academic support, including peer tutoring, are available (<http://www.advising.neu.edu>).