



Minnesota STATE COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

H1N1 -- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

October 8, 2009

The following questions and answers are provided in response to the questions received by the Office of the Chancellor related to academic and student affairs issues and the H1N1 flu (“swine flu”). These questions and answers are intended to provide general information as students, faculty, staff, parents and other constituents avail themselves of the web-based H1N1 planning information at our colleges and universities. The Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health websites provide extensive information regarding the control of and response to H1N1 flu:

- http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm
- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/basics/care/index.html>

Please note that:

- Each of our Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the system’s Office of the Chancellor remain open for classes/operation.
- Each of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the system’s Office of the Chancellor have current plans in place in response to local campus needs/interests or at the system level;

1. Class Cancellation

Question: Who decides whether to cancel a class?

Answer: Each college and university is responsible for responding to incidents of illness among its faculty and staff. Campus administration will assess whether to hold, cancel, postpone or reschedule specific classes or events as circumstances warrant, in keeping with the campus H1N1 (All Hazards) plan. Check the college or university website for information about how cancellation notices will be provided to faculty and students.

2. Impact on Classroom Attendance Policies

Question: What if a faculty member has “required attendance” or reduces grades based on a specific number of absences in their course outline/syllabi or other class communications?

Answer: Fully recognizing the importance of class attendance and participation, we are in the midst of a significant public health challenge and it is very important that instructors and students who are suffering from a “flu-like illness” (the CDC term) not feel obliged to attend class when they are ill, to avoid putting the health of faculty members and students at risk and hindering their own recoveries. Also, students who must care for children or older adults may not be able to attend class. Accordingly, faculty are strongly encouraged to consider adapting class attendance and grading policies to address student absences given the extenuating circumstances of this situation, so that no one’s health is jeopardized unnecessarily and the severity of the influenza season can be limited to the extent possible.

3. Ill Students in Class

Question: As a faculty member, what should I do if a sick student comes to class?

Answer: If a student in class appears to be ill with a “flu-like illness,” the faculty member is encouraged to discretely encourage the student to leave the class and go home, without penalty for missing class, for their own good and that of everyone else in the classroom. Faculty are responsible for managing their classrooms; if a faculty member feels additional action is warranted because a student is displaying flu-like symptoms but has not voluntarily left the classroom, the instructor may direct the student to leave the classroom or request assistance from administration.

4. Back-up Syllabus

Question: As a faculty member, are there other steps I should take regarding the H1N1 issues?

Answer: It is recommended that faculty be familiar with the institution’s All Hazards/H1N1 plans and information in the event of broader class cancellations. In addition, faculty members may want to prepare a back-up syllabus or determine how course assignments might be modified in the event an accelerated finish to the term is necessary. Any changes should include attention to prerequisite content for subsequent courses and including recommended work and reading assignments for students during any disruption, to facilitate later resumption of the course. An up to date syllabus and class notes also will assist a substitute faculty member in the event one is necessary.

5. Clinical Requirements

Question: What is the Minnesota Board of Nursing’s position related to H1N1 illness and participating in and/or meeting clinical requirements?

Answer: The Minnesota Board of Nursing does not mandate a specific number of clinical hours. This has been confirmed with the Board of Nursing Education Specialist.

Program requirements directly aligned to Board of Nursing standards should be discussed with program faculty to determine if additional changes are necessary. For all others, the faculty should focus on "Do I have enough information to evaluate the student? Has the student met the objectives? Am I able to appropriately evaluate the student's clinical performance?" Faculty can approach this issue in numerous ways including simulation, skills lab, etc. Faculty members

have broad discretion over how they evaluate students as long as the evaluation process is consistent and uniform for similarly situated students.

6. Student Absences

Question: Are there guidelines or standards relating to student absences due to H1N1 for specific program areas?

Answer: Faculty, both in health care and other programs, are encouraged to review student handbook information relating to student absences; program faculty and staff should review those standards in the context of the H1N1 flu situation and evaluate whether the standards need to be adapted to fit this particular health threat.

7. Health-care related programs

Question: Is there some general guidance to campuses for nursing programs or other health-related fields?

Answer: Faculty, students and staff should continue to visit their campus web-pages, read and review posted information or access campus-wide communications on H1N1. General advice regarding management of H1N1 issues includes:

- Communicate with students who may be going into clinical settings about the need to be appropriately immunized.
- Think "prevention." Students and faculty should not go to clinical settings where there are individuals who are already compromised if they are sick or have flu-like symptoms.
- Notify students about alternatives available if they become sick with H1N1, including what types of adaptations can be made to accommodate missed classes or clinicals.
- Maintain flexibility to the extent possible in addressing each situation as it arises.

Additional questions should be addressed to the appropriate dean, or chief academic or student affairs officer at your college or university.