

September 21, 2009

TO: All Instructional Titles

RE: Impact of the flu season on instruction

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has advised educational institutions to expect increases in cases of H1N1 influenza during the Fall term. UCSC is providing information and general advice to the campus community at: <http://www.ucsc.edu/flu>.

This message focuses on the potential impacts on instruction as individual students and faculty may come down with the flu.

General Advice:

Based upon CDC recommendations, members of the campus community who develop flu-like illness (fever and chills AND a cough or sore throat) should isolate themselves until at least 24 hours after they are free of the fever. (This would likely be a period of 3-5 days.)

Extensive preparations have been made by the campus health center, residential life staff, and campus emergency personnel to help prevent or limit infections and to deal with serious cases that arise. Nonetheless, we can anticipate that our limited resources will be severely strained. Hence we encourage all members of the campus community to educate themselves about using the information and materials provided.

Guidelines for responding to students who become ill:

Early in the term, announce to students that they should not come to class if they become ill with flu like illness. The university has adopted the CDC recommendation that members of the campus community who develop flu like illness should self-isolate until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of fever. Again, this will likely be a period of 3-5 days. Let your students know that they should follow this recommendation in deciding whether or not to come to class. Advise them that if they do become ill with the flu and are self-isolating, they should notify their instructors promptly by e-mail of their situation. (This would be important documentation should a subsequent withdrawal from the course be requested.)

Use flexibility and good judgment in dealing with student absences in such circumstances.

These cases will be considered routine medical conditions, and per Student Health Center policy, formal documentation from medical personnel will not be available. University Health Service and other health care facilities will not have the capacity both to treat students and to provide documentation excusing student absences in what will be routine cases.

Be prepared with a make-up policy for students who must miss exams or assignment deadlines during their self-isolation period. Have a plan for handling requests to make up, substitute, or excuse work that reasonably maintains fairness and equity. Consider how you might use educational technologies

(whether WebCT or simple e-mail) to allow students to do work from home once they are feeling better but are still self-isolating. The Academic Senate issued a report in May 2007 in this regard, and a Committee on Educational Policy report offers useful suggestions to faculty on how to deal with student absences related to illness (see <http://senate.ucsc.edu/cep/RptonMedicalExcuses.pdf>).

When faculty become ill:

The advice on self-isolation applies to instructional staff who become ill. If you cannot meet a class, you should promptly notify your department chair or head of other course sponsoring agency.

Your department should develop in advance routines for notifying classes of instructor absences and arrangements for substitute instructors where appropriate. If a course is supported through WebCT and access or permissions for the course site need to be extended to substitutes, contact the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (459-5506, fitc@ucsc.edu) for assistance.

The campus administration will be monitoring the flu outbreak closely as the term progresses and will issue appropriate communications regarding continuity of instruction and the administration of final exams depending upon how the flu season unfolds. In the meantime, instructors are urged to be flexible in dealing with student absences.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining the health of the campus community. If you have questions, please contact the VPDUE's office: Assistant Vice Provost Jessica Fiske Bailey (459-4307 or jfbailey@ucsc.edu).

Best,



William A. Ladusaw,
Vice Provost and Dean
of Undergraduate Education