

Dear MSU Faculty,

As you are no doubt aware, there is a high probability that MSU will have to deal with significant numbers of staff, students, and faculty who become ill with H1N1 influenza (a.k.a. swine flu) this fall. The purpose of this email is to discuss how this could impact the classes you are teaching and to suggest some options and resources for coping with this. It is worth emphasizing that we deal with seasonal flu and other illnesses every year, and so these discussions are limited to impacts that go beyond those that we normally experience. However, before addressing these issues, there is some information from the MSU Health Service that I would like to share (with thanks to Jim Mitchell for preparing this).

HEALTH INFORMATION:

- H1N1 flu appears to be no more serious than the seasonal flu we experience every year.
- Most who contract H1N1 flu will feel very ill (fever, body aches, extreme fatigue, cough, or sore throat) for 4 to 7 days. Patients can largely manage the symptoms without seeing a health care provider. Links to detailed information about self-assessment and treatment are posted on the [MSU Student Health Service web site](#).
- Those who develop symptoms have probably been contagious for about 24 hours before the symptoms developed and will remain so until about 24 hours after the fever has subsided.
- Those with underlying health conditions that put them at elevated risk (e.g., pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, people with chronic lung problems, etc.) are advised to visit their health care providers if they show symptoms.
- All members of the MSU community are advised to stay home if ill to prevent further spread of the disease. If you must go out, consider wearing a mask, keeping at least 6 feet from other people, and covering your cough.
- The best prevention is to wash your hands often, use hand sanitizer, and avoid close contact with others. Wearing a surgical mask is not recommended as a way to prevent infection; it is a way for infected people to avoid spreading the virus.

For those teaching courses this semester, this could mean increased numbers of students missing class for medical reasons, and the risk that you will be forced to miss a week or more of classes at some point during the semester. The extent to which this will affect individual courses is very broad given the range of class sizes, pedagogies, and abilities of students to learn independently. Although there is no way to predict how MSU will be affected, early planning could help to ease the impact if MSU has a large outbreak. Here are some things to consider.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO CONSIDER:

- Students displaying flu-like symptoms will be advised to assume they have the flu and to stay home or in their residence hall rooms. The Student Health Service will not be providing notes to students to excuse their absences.

- Students who are in high-risk groups may be advised to avoid campus during an outbreak to avoid becoming infected. This could lead to particularly long absences for some students.
- Faculty, staff, and students could have significant absences necessary to care for sick children or elderly parents.
- The impact could be spread out over several months so that you may have students routinely missing exams, laboratories, recitations, etc.

Obviously, dealing with some of these possibilities will be challenging, and it is important that academic quality not be compromised in the name of accommodation or flexibility. That said, I do have some suggestions. If you have others, please forward them to me and I will make them available on the MSU website.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Plan for how you will deal with significant absences for exams. Consider dropping the lowest score if you have multiple exams, or scheduling a make-up exam in advance.
- If you reward attendance or participation, consider allowing student to miss up to 3-5 classes without penalty, which should be sufficient for most students who become ill.
- Provide alternatives for students who have extended absence (students from at-risk groups, parents with sick children, etc.) These could include alternative assignments, additional readings, or other ways to ensure the learning goals are met.
- Plan for your own absence. This should include a way to notify your students of your expectations while you are ill. Consider using Desire to Learn (D2L) to provide an on-line bridge while you are away. All courses have been pre-provisioned this year, and the Burns Technology Center is preparing information and training designed specifically for those just interested in using D2L as a short-term bridge. Information on this will follow.
- Consider the impact of having GTAs suddenly becoming ill. Will you cancel labs/recitations or find others to fill in? Make sure you have good contact information if you plan to arrange substitutes.
- Develop plans to manage your research if you or your staff become ill.

Finally, the [MSU Student Health Service](#) will be providing a lot of information to the campus through their web site. Please keep up to date on developments. I will be posting a version of this memo online and I welcome additional suggestions that you provide.

Regards,

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