

University of Connecticut, Stamford
The Pandemic Flu Preparedness Committee
Subcommittee on Instruction
Recommendations for the UConn-Stamford Faculty
August, 2009

Background¹:

In June of this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that a global pandemic of influenza A (H1N1) was underway and simultaneously raised the worldwide pandemic alert level. This action reflected the spread of H1N1 (increasing number of cases), not the severity of illness. The U.S. is reporting the largest number of novel H1N1 cases of any country, but most people who become ill recover without medical treatment (as such, some cases of H1N1 go undetected from an illness surveillance standpoint). There remains the possibility that the virus may mutate into a more serious form, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend preparation in the forms of general planning and coordination; prevention; infection control; communication; and operational and instructional continuity for educational and other institutions.

Associate Vice Provost and Campus Director Michael Ego assembled an H1N1 Preparedness Committee to guide UConn Stamford's efforts in this regard. A Subcommittee on Instruction formed and was charged with developing a set of recommendations related to course instruction. The Subcommittee, whose membership is listed below, includes faculty, students, and instructional design staff. The Subcommittee examined forthcoming information about H1N1 from authoritative sources² and sought guidance on issues related to continuity of instruction in the event of significant absences and campus closures.

The campus Committee, led by Michael Ego, continues to meet; however, given the need for instructors to prepare for the upcoming term, it seems prudent to communicate our current advice for instructional continuity. A guiding motivation for the development of these recommendations is recognition that students may experience significant concern about the possibility of a significant number of classes being canceled. Faculty may have similar concerns about unforeseen cancellations. Additionally, given the seeming likelihood that students may miss classes due to illness even if the campus is not closed, it is appropriate to consider accommodations for individuals as well.

Although it seems unlikely that a severe form of flu will occur, the Subcommittee approached the task with an intention to "plan for the worst and hope for the best." With that in mind, we have put together a set of suggestions for the faculty. This document addresses only those recommendations that emerge from the Subcommittee on Instruction, and communication regarding other functions will be forthcoming. A larger H1N1 plan (to be distributed) will include authoritative information about H1N1 as well as the campus plan for general planning and coordination; prevention; infection control; communication; and operational continuity. Periodic updates may be helpful depending on circumstances. The Subcommittee works under

¹ Source of information about H1N1 is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>.

² E.g., CDC, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and preparedness plans of other institutions

the premise that faculty should be prepared for various foreseeable circumstances, and can (and should) be counted on to provide prompt, clear, reliable information and reassurance for students. As such, our initial recommendations follow. Along with the rest of the H1N1 Preparedness Committee, we will continue to monitor the situation and will provide ongoing guidance as indicated.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this and encourage you to contact us with input.

-- Lauren DeChant, Jerry Engel, Anne Farrell, Claudia Kraemer, Elena Levy,
Kevin McEvoy, Venu Menon, Kelly Perez, and Charlie Yarish

Recommendations

A. General recommendations for campus procedures

1. Decisions about canceling large gatherings, including classes and other campus events, will reside with the campus director, who will consult with public health officials regarding necessary and appropriate precautions. As feasible and appropriate, the director will consult with members of the committee for input.
2. The larger campus plan should include a number of methods for communication.
3. In the event of a serious pandemic emergency or prolonged closure of campus, the committee will provide consultation and input to the campus director, as indicated.
4. Attendance at mandatory classes (e.g., science labs) may serve as useful benchmarks for absenteeism. (Other classes may not be reliable indicators because there is significant variance in attendance, but prior years' attendance at these labs may serve as baseline data.) Attendance at these mandatory classes should be reported to the Campus Director on a weekly basis beginning with the first week of the semester.
5. Faculty who cancel individual classes due to illness should do all three of the following: (a) call the information desk, (b) call or email Sheila Moore, and (c) call or email Rosa James.

B. Recommendations for faculty preparedness

Guidance for continuity of instruction emphasizes development of contingency plans, especially using email and web platforms (HuskyCT) as alternate means of delivering instruction.

Instructions for starred* recommendations can be found on the Stamford website. There is an H1N1 Flu News & Resources link from the Home Page. The direct link is:

<http://www.stamford.uconn.edu/FluNews.html>

There are 3 basic steps.

1. **Develop a plan for continuity of instruction** (e.g., alternate delivery of instruction and exchange of information). Methods to consider:
 - a. *HuskyCT* as an alternate means of delivering instruction, including uploading PowerPoint slides as substitutes/supplements for lectures/readings, posting readings, giving and collecting assignments, and holding virtual discussions of course content.

- b. *Email* as a means of communication and alternate delivery.

At the minimum, we suggest that faculty (if not already done):

- a. Request a HuskyCT site for each class well in advance of the start of the semester*
 - b. Learn to use HuskyCT email, the *announcement* and *discussion* tools, and to upload documents.*
 - c. Develop and state your policy for making up work missed due to illness (with the understanding that students who become ill with flu may not visit a physician)
2. **Develop a communication plan** (for communicating cancellation of individual class sessions, e.g., email, phone tree, posting on HuskyCT, other means such as Twitter).
 3. **Inform students.** Ensure that communication and continuity plans are stated clearly on your syllabus (see sample at end of this document) announced in class, and posted on HuskyCT.

Support available and specific suggestions for faculty preparedness:

1. *HuskyCT support for faculty.* A range of options for becoming proficient in use of HuskyCT are available:
 - a. Lauren DeChant, Educational Technology Specialist, (203-251-9587, lauren.dechant@uconn.edu) will provide one-on-one instruction on HuskyCT. This is available to full time and part time faculty. Training is available anytime, Monday – Friday by appointment. (Evening appointments are also available). Call or email in advance to request training (please, no walk-ins). A one-hour session will provide most faculty with the basics of HuskyCT and be adequate preparation to use it as a contingency.
 - b. The Subcommittee will distribute a list of faculty volunteers who will help other faculty navigate HuskyCT.*
 - c. Handouts are available on establishing and navigating HuskyCT (See the H1N1 Flu News & Resources link from the Stamford Website Home Page.)
 - d. In the event the Stamford Campus is closed, Lauren DeChant will be available to assist faculty from home via email and phone. If Lauren DeChant is ill, faculty will be directed to contact the Instructional Resource Center (IRC) in Storrs. All relevant contact info will be posted on the UConn Stamford H1N1 News & Resources link.
2. *Course syllabi.* Construct your syllabi with accommodations for:
 - a. Individual student absences due to influenza
 - b. The possibility that the campus may be closed if a large proportion of the campus community becomes ill, or to prevent infection
 - c. Instructor absence due to illness
 - d. Loss of traditional classroom time (e.g., missed class sessions). Many faculty already build in flexibility to accommodate cancellations due to weather or a desire to expand/emphasize some course content, e.g., build in one class session topic “to be announced.”
3. *Faculty and campus communication.* Updates and breaking news will be distributed through UConn email and the UConn Stamford website.

- a. *All faculty should check email frequently.* Ensure remote access to UConn accounts. For part time and adjunct faculty who use this account less frequently, kindly check your UConn email at least daily or consider forwarding UConn email to another account (this needs to be done in advance).*
 - b. *Confer with departmental colleagues* about discipline-specific challenges, e.g. field placements, lab classes, etc.
 - c. *Familiarize yourself with the resources and information on the campus' H1N1 Flu News & Resources link from the Stamford website (<http://www.stamford.uconn.edu>).* The link will take users to a page with the following sections:
 - H1N1 updates and announcements
 - For faculty: HuskyCT basic training materials, UConn Email instructions and links to help resources
 - For students: Basic help for HuskyCT, Huskymail and NetID.
4. *Faculty-student communication.* Whereas campus leadership will be responsible for the overall communication strategy, faculty should be prepared to provide regular updates and information to students via class announcements, HuskyCT, and email.
- a. Minimally, it is recommended that faculty have a list of each student's preferred email address, as we find that many students do not regularly check Huskymail. If faculty are using Microsoft Outlook, a group distribution list can be set up at the beginning of the semester.*
 - b. State your communication plan on the written course syllabus and announce it in class. The plan should indicate how cancellations and accommodations will be handled. A Sample Plan is attached for reference.*
 - c. Encourage students to check their Huskymail accounts in addition to any personal accounts they use. An alternative is to encourage students who do not check Huskymail to set up a forwarder to an account they will check.*
 - d. As applicable, urge students to become conversant with HuskyCT and suggest that they log on prior to commuting to campus, etc. Consider posting a handout during the first week of class and asking students to ensure that they can log in and download the document.

SAMPLE TEXT FOR SYLLABUS

Flu preparedness:

Because of the H1N1 virus (influenza type A) pandemic, there is increased likelihood for flu and flu-like illness this semester. Should you need to miss class due to illness (or other reason), please email the instructor (preferred to a call). Briefly characterize the reason for your absence (illness-flu, illness-not flu, family emergency, etc.). If you have flu or flu-like illness, it is important to inform the instructor, so please report it whether or not a physician has diagnosed you.

Information about flu is available at the UConn Stamford website (www.stamford.uconn.edu, then click on the "Influenza A (H1N1) information link or visit the www.flu.gov website). If you have the flu, you should avoid contact with others and follow the instructions given by the

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about when to return to work/school. Currently, government officials advise staying home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. That may change; if it goes, the UConn Stamford website and www.flu.gov will be updated to reflect the advice of public health officials. I will accommodate absence due to illness by extending due dates by one week. (See section on assignments below.) You will routinely find class notes and handouts on the HuskyCT site and should obtain and review these if you are absent.

Public health officials suggest that universities and instructors have plans for continuity of instruction (e.g., alternate delivery of instruction and exchange of information) in the unlikely event that campus is closed due to an outbreak of flu. If campus closes, notice will appear on the UConn Stamford website and I will post a notice on HuskyCT as well. We will use HuskyCT as a means of communication and exchange of information. If classes are cancelled, look for detailed instructions on HuskyCT. Expect to be responsible for readings and to participate in an online discussion as an alternative to a regular class meeting. There is extra class time built into the syllabus in case we experience significant cancellations.