September 25, 2015

Dear Faculty,

NDSU Student Health Service (SHS) does not provide students with excuses for class absences or tardiness due to illness or injury. The mission of the SHS includes educating students on appropriate health care consumerism. This reinforces the students' responsibility to communicate proactively and directly with faculty about conditions or issues that interfere with their class attendance. Providing medical excuses sends mixed messages to students about the appropriate use of health care resources. Many common illnesses and injuries do not require care by a medical professional. For example, sore throat, cold symptoms, or mild gastrointestinal illnesses are often best cared for by rest and self-care at home. Visiting the SHS solely to obtain documentation of illness uses valuable appointment time, and potentially exposes others to their illnesses.

We recognize faculty may find it difficult to determine when to excuse student absences. However, in most cases we are unable to determine if a student is too sick to attend class as this is very subjective. We encourage students to speed their own recovery and to refrain from spreading infections throughout the campus community by making mature decisions as to when they are too sick to attend class or go to work.

This letter is not intended to discourage you from referring students to utilize the SHS. Students have reported their faculty have encouraged them to seek care at SHS and they have been acutely ill and required medical care. We also recognize that students are often unsure about when to come in for care. We encourage anyone with mild illness or injury to call SHS at 701-231-7331 and ask to speak with a nurse if he/she would like assistance in determining how to best care for an illness or injury. Students can also access the SHS web page at https://www.ndsu.edu/studenthealthservice/ to schedule an appointment or review wellness education material. In addition, we have a new program in which Healthy Herd Champion Peer Educators are out and about on campus working with students on a number of topics, including tips for common cold and flu.

Our policy is consistent with recommendations from the American College Health Association and the policies of our peer institutions. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Patricia Dirk, Director of Student Health Service
701-231-8758