INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY PLAN

As you are aware, public health and government officials are asking everyone to develop plans in the event of a possible widespread flu outbreak this academic year. Although we cannot predict the severity of the flu, be prepared for the possibility of major absenteeism among students, and/or faculty.

Since a severe flu outbreak, like other unexpected emergencies, could happen suddenly and without warning, plans and action steps need to be in place to address issues such as anticipated academic disruption, notification procedures, large scale absenteeism, course requirements, alternate classroom teaching strategies, etc. Please address these issues now with your students, department chairs/heads, and deans to have clear alternative plans in place, should the need arise.

I ask you to be flexible and responsive as you seek ways to provide appropriate and reasonable accommodations that will ensure successful completion of course requirements during a time of uncertainty.

Here are some thoughts for your consideration to help assist us in maintaining instructional continuity during a possible pandemic flu outbreak here on campus.

EDUCATE YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT H1N1

This situation presents a great opportunity for us to educate our students. Consider having discussions with your students regarding H1N1 including what it is; important prevention measures for preventing the spread of the flu (proper handwashing, avoiding exposure to infected people (social distancing), avoiding sharing items, self-isolation, covering mouth and nose if coughing or sneezing; staying home if you are sick, etc.), and encouraging flu vaccinations (seasonal and H1N1). The following websites may be helpful to you in having this conversation with your students. The following are helpful resources regarding information on seasonal flu including H1N1 (CDC http://www.cdc.gov/flu/, North Dakota Department of Health http://www.ndflu.com/, Fargo Cass Public Health http://www.cityoffargo.com/CityInfo/Departments/Health/InfluenzaH1N1/, NDSU Student Health Service http://wellness.ndsu.nodak.edu/shs/, http://www.ndsu.edu/vpur/h1n1.

Start an ongoing discussion with students and invite students to ask questions concerning H1N1 and how they will be able to fulfill their academic requirements if they or you should become ill.

COMMUNICATE YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY PLANS

Develop Instructional Continuity Plans for your class(es) and be sure to communicate those plans to your students. Modify your syllabus and instructional approaches to address issues that
may arise due to a pandemic flu outbreak in your class, including what you will do in the case of large scale student absenteeisms, or if you become ill as instructor. Be sure to address issues regarding students missing classes or exams for an extended period of time (possibly 1-2 weeks), extension of deadlines for homework assignments, policies concerning mandatory class attendance or requirements for doctor’s slips for absences. Instructional continuity plans should be flexible, responsive, and accommodating to students and should include a plan if the University is forced to cancel classes or close. Faculty may have to alter course content, course delivery, course requirements, course assignments, and deadlines, exam schedules, grading procedures, and other instructional strategies where appropriate. Faculty who use active learning techniques that emphasize and require close collaborative learning groups including pair/share group learning (and other close student encounters) should review these policies and practices and implement preventative measures to reduce human to human transmission/exposure of H1N1 among students. It will also be important to inform your students regarding how you will communicate important announcements and course changes to students during the crisis period. Faculty should also communicate expectations of students regarding how and when as instructor you want to be informed of student absences. Communicate and emphasize to students to not come to class if they are ill, to prevent the spread of the flu. Reassure them that you will work with them to ensure that they can complete semester coursework and requirements.

USE ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY APPROACHES

Develop plans to allow students to work from home. If students are required to be home sick due to flu-like illness, faculty should consider delivering their course requirements and content via alternative modes of delivery. Faculty may consider posting instructional content, assignments, and giving quizzes and exams online to accommodate students to ensure they are able to complete semester course requirements. Faculty may also want to consider audio recording or videotaping classes as possible instructional delivery alternatives. Use of tools such as Blackboard, Wimba, blogs, chat rooms, email listservs can also greatly assist you with meeting students instructional needs. If you need help with any of these instructional technology tools, please contact NDSU_Blackboard_Support@nds.edu or the Help Desk (231-8685). Faculty may also need to be prepared to work from home, if needed.

There are many other ways to accommodate students so be creative. We want faculty to have the flexibility to work with students in coming up with their own solutions to ensure that students have access and opportunity to fulfill semester course requirements.

MONITOR AND REPORT THE FLU STATUS IN YOUR CLASS

Faculty should monitor the status of student absenteeisms within their class and report any large scale absenteeisms to University officials. This information will be helpful to the University in monitoring the status of flu-like illnesses on campus, and alert officials of any flu-outbreaks within departments or Colleges. This will help guide important decisions including stepping up prevention measures, or possibly help determine the need for cancelling classes or closing the University. The University H1N1 Crisis Management Response Team (CMRT) has prepared a form to assist you in tracking student absenteeisms in your classes (i.e., University Class Attendance Tracker Form, http://wellness.ndsu.nodak.edu/shs/). Faculty should send their
University Class Attendance Tracker forms, and/or also report any large scale absenteeisms in their classes to Janna Stoskopf, Janna.Stoskopf@ndsu.edu, Dean of Student Life, Memorial Union 250.

SUMMARY

You will likely have other ideas how to accommodate our students during a possible pandemic flu outbreak in your classroom or on campus. Please share these ideas with your colleagues and your department chair so that we can all learn from each other regarding the best way to serve our students. We greatly appreciate all that you have done and also will be doing to ensure that our students receive the instructional continuity necessary to complete their coursework.

Without doubt, I believe we have the best faculty and the best students of any campus, and I am convinced that we will continue to deliver the best education possible despite any challenges or disruptions we may encounter. Your willingness to serve our students in this way is really appreciated.

And lastly, I would like everyone to consider the following guiding principles when developing your instructional continuity plans: be sensitive, be flexible, be responsive, be accommodating, be prepared, and most importantly, be reasonable.

Thank you for your commitment to NDSU.

*(Prepared with input from Dean Charles Peterson, Dean Janna Stoskopf, and Provost Paul LeBel, UND)