

Subject: Update on the H1N1 Flu and Impact
Date: Monday, October 12, 2009 4:28:15 PM

Dear Faculty and Staff:

OCCC continues to monitor the impact that the flu is having on faculty, staff, and students. From daily reports provided by supervisors, the Vice President for Human Resources is monitoring faculty and staff absence due to illness. Also, a sample of volunteer faculty has regularly been reporting student absences in 150 sections to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

While we do have reports of employees out ill with the flu, the overall number has not been significantly higher than usual. You may be interested to know that with 1,371 current employees (full and part-time), the percentage of employees reporting being absent due to illness has ranged from 1.0% to a high of 2.4% per day.

In terms of student absences, the numbers increased from around 15% to a high of 26%, and in the last few days have been consistently around 23%. Since we do not have good comparison data, we cannot conclude that this number is significantly higher than usual. However, some faculty have indicated that the rate of absences does seem higher. Faculty are asked to continue to be flexible with students who are following the recommendation to not come to class if they are ill.

Consistent with the HIPPA and ADA requirements, OCCC will not provide to the public the names of employees or students who are reported to have the H1N1 flu. All faculty and staff are reminded that the health status of their fellow employees is to be treated as confidential information.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that Oklahoma continues as one of thirty-seven states that are reporting widespread H1N1 flu activity. Since the seasonal flu is not yet in wide circulation, almost all of the flu cases in the state of Oklahoma at this time are assumed to be the H1N1 flu.

If you or a member of your family are ill or become ill, I hope that it is a mild case and that you recover quickly without serious complications. While most people report mild symptoms, for some the flu can be a serious and deadly illness. Remember, if you have underlying medical conditions or if your fever persists and/or your symptoms are severe, please seek professional medical assistance.

As mentioned before, the CDC strongly advises that the best way to prevent the spread of the disease is to isolate those ill with the flu away from those who do not have the flu. So please, if you are ill, do not come to campus or your work site and do not return for at least 24 hours after you are fever free without the assistance of fever-reducing medication.

To protect yourself, continue to practice good hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Also, avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands as this is a common way the virus is transmitted.

As you probably know, the H1N1 vaccine is now available. However, supplies are limited at this time and are being distributed by priority, beginning with school age children and pregnant women. OCCC is working to be a site where the H1N1 vaccine will be administered when more vaccine becomes available. If OCCC does become a H1N1 vaccine site, you will be provided detailed information regarding the date, location, and eligibility.

With regards to the seasonal flu, I had hoped that the seasonal flu vaccine would be administered on the main campus through the City/County Health Department and the Visiting Nurses Association. Both organizations have cancelled due to limited supplies of the seasonal flu vaccine. If you have not yet received the seasonal flu vaccine, please check with your medical providers for your best options to receive the vaccine.

For the latest information, regularly check the OCCC website under Pandemic (www.occc.edu/pandemic). The members of President's Cabinet are provided weekly updates on the flu and its impact at OCCC. So if you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact your President's Cabinet member or me.

Sincerely,
Paul Sechrist
President