

September 2006

TO: Members of the Campus Community

FROM: Jim Stakenas, PhD  
Vice President, Administration & Finance

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Director, Human Resources

RE: **INFLUENZA PANDEMIC**

We hope that you have had an enjoyable summer and are looking forward to the start of the academic year.

With much being reported about the possibility of an influenza related pandemic, we want to let you know that preparations are being made at MCLA in anticipation of this event. Although we recognize our inability to keep this pandemic from reaching MCLA should it begin, we are confident that being knowledgeable about what we need to do to respond to this potential health crisis will help minimize the impact on our MCLA family. Please review the important information below and help us to prepare for this possible event.

What is a pandemic?

A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a disease, with outbreaks or epidemics occurring in many countries and in most regions of the world. A pandemic of influenza results when a new influenza virus emerges which is markedly different from recently circulating strains.

This is what we have consistently heard about the influenza pandemic should it occur:

- 30% of our population will be affected by the virus and an additional 10% will be missing from work to care for those who become sick. We can expect to be missing 40% of our workforce during this time. (Being absent from work may be related to caring for a child or other family member.)
- The duration of the virus related illness is two days yet the contagion period is an additional eight days. Consequently, if we are sick with this strain of the flu virus, we can plan on being absent from work in this ten (10) day period.
- Experts are not aware of when the virus will affect the northeast.
- Because of the long contagion period, the virus is expected to persist through two waves and could last as long as eight weeks.
- History shows us that influenza spreads around the globe exceedingly fast allowing little time to react.

MCLA has established an Emergency Response Team that has the responsibility to complete plans needed to respond to the influenza crisis. This team consists of senior staff and director level positions that have direct responsibility for the health and safety of our campus. The team is interested in making sure our campus population is aware of what precautions we can all take to protect ourselves and our families as well as the importance of maintaining the business of the College.

**This letter provides information useful to protect you and your family.** In the next month you will be meeting with others at MCLA to understand how we must prepare for this event to continue to operate the College if 40% of our campus population is either sick or is caring for someone who is sick. Below, for your information, is a list of what we can do in regard to our personal life to be best prepared.

**Please consider the following to prepare to take care of yourself and your family.**

- Make sure your medical provider is aware of all family health issues.
- Have a month's supply of prescription drugs on hand for all who require such medication.
- Have a store of non-perishable food and bottled water sufficient enough for your family for two weeks.
- Identify child care options that are available to you if these are needed.
- Identify transportation options available if needed.
- Compile a list of contact numbers for your extended family.
- Make sure your family is aware of preventive measures such as hand washing and cough etiquette.
- Understand your health care options and benefits.

**Over the next six weeks, all staff will meet with their division directors or department chairs to learn how we will prepare our offices for a response to a reduced workforce in the event of the influenza pandemic.** It is important that we review our basic work routines, and those deadlines that we must meet to operate our College during this time. We understand the difficulty in even contemplating such illness in our families and within our MCLA family but we will do what we can to make sure information is available to you and that we orchestrate our operations as efficiently as possible until this influenza threat passes.

A website [http://www.mcla.edu/College\\_Contacts/Administration/Administration\\_\\_Finance/Policies/](http://www.mcla.edu/College_Contacts/Administration/Administration__Finance/Policies/) has been established to report regularly on campus preparations and, again, what we can do to protect our immediate and extended families.