

August 31, 2009

TO: Members of the Campus Community

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

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RE: **INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PLANNING**

We hope that you enjoyed the summer and are looking forward to the start of the academic year. As we look ahead to the important work of supporting our students and the College, we are renewing our planning efforts to be prepared for the flu season. Here is what we know:

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization declared the current H1N1 outbreak a “pandemic.”

In response, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends organizations identify essential employees, essential business functions, and other critical factors required to maintain operations during a flu outbreak and implement plans to manage the potential for significant absenteeism in the workplace during such an outbreak.

The CDC also recommends establishing emergency communications plans for tracking and communicating business and operations status.

We are confident that being knowledgeable about what we need to do to respond to a potential health crisis will help minimize the impact on the MCLA community. Please review the important information below and help us to prepare.

### **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 an influenza pandemic:

- An estimated 30% of our population may be affected by the virus. Additionally, 10% of the workforce may be missing from work to care for sick relatives. As a result, organizations may need to maintain operations with up to 40% of the workforce unavailable.
- The duration of the virus related illness is two to five days. The contagion period lasts for twenty-four hours beyond the time you no longer have a fever. Consequently, anyone who contracts this strain of the flu virus can plan on being absent from work during this period.
- History shows us that influenza spreads around the globe exceedingly fast allowing little time to react.

MCLA has an established 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 committed to ensuring that our campus population is aware of what precautions we all can take to protect ourselves and our families as well as the importance of maintaining the business of the College.

In September you will receive more information to understand how we must prepare to respond to H1N1 influenza in our community and to continue to operate the College if many of our campus population are either sick or are caring for someone who is sick.

**Below, for your information, is a list of what we can do to prepare ourselves and our families:**

- Make sure your medical provider is aware of all family health issues.
- Have a sufficient supply of prescription drugs on hand for all who require such medication.
- Speak to your physician about flu vaccinations.
- 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.

**During September, all departments will meet with their division directors or department chairs to learn how we will prepare our offices to respond 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.

A website <http://www.mcla.edu/pandemic> has been established to report regularly on campus preparations. Please feel free to contact the Human Resources office with any question regarding your health insurance or sick leave benefits and, again, what we can do to protect our immediate and extended families.