

September 2, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you have had a healthy and productive summer and are refreshed and energized as we begin the 2009-2010 academic year. I certainly have enjoyed the warm welcome I have received from the University, including many of you whom I have already had the privilege of meeting.

As you are aware from media reports, the world is currently dealing with the novel A H1N1 influenza pandemic, which is predicted to peak this fall when classes and instruction are well underway. The University is working on influenza mitigation strategies including signage, sanitizers and education through the new www.brocku.ca/pandemicflu website; however it is also important for us to take concrete steps to minimize any disruption to our students' programs. To that end, it is vital that teaching personnel plan in advance for potential situations, in which they or significant numbers of their students miss classes/labs/seminars/ placements or are unable to complete or grade assignments due to illness. This planning may require revisions to the course syllabi and therefore instructors need to develop their contingency plans now, although we realize the time constraints that these new developments have placed on us all.

We have launched the Brock Pandemic Influenza website (www.brocku.ca/pandemicflu) which provides valuable information relevant to the pandemic, which I encourage you to review with respect to preparing for and dealing with a possible widespread influenza epidemic at home and at work. Please direct all teaching personnel (faculty, sessional instructors, teaching assistants, lab demonstrators, etc.) to the website and ensure that proactive planning, discussion and strategizing with others is conducted in your unit. We are not alone in developing some plans in advance, for example we have included there a link to University of Toronto's Academic Planning Strategies for H1N1.

The Brock Centre for Teaching, Learning and Educational Technologies can provide suggestions for mechanisms that might be incorporated into courses, particularly with respect to course delivery mechanisms, evaluation options and deadline flexibility. A list of possible options is being developed by CTLET and will be posted on the Brock Pandemic Influenza website next week.

Brock's Pandemic Influenza Planning team is working with ITS on a "Got Flu?" channel which will be linked on all mybrocku.ca portal access pages to allow tracking of influenza incidence among members of the Brock community and to provide for some verification of absence capability in the face of elevated case volumes. It will be activated by September 10th. If we find ourselves in a full pandemic situation it will be very difficult for students to see

physicians and we may have to use self-registration on such a website in lieu of medical certificates. More detailed information on this channel will be posted on the Brock Pandemic Influenza website.

Everyone needs to work together to minimize the impact of a possible pandemic and to ensure the success of our students. In closing, I will reiterate the key actions we are requesting of you:

- Follow all public health recommendations with respect to hand washing and cough etiquette
- Build flexibility into your curriculum to accommodate anticipated elevated illness levels
- Advise students of the need to manage their health and academic success in the context of a possible pandemic
- Monitor your own health and stay home if you are ill with influenza symptoms.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I truly hope that these precautions will help prevent the worst-case scenarios we are forced to plan for. I wish you all the best as we move into the new academic year, and I look forward to meeting more of you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Murray Knuttila', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Murray Knuttila, Ph.D.
Provost & Vice-President Academic