

Message to the Gonzaga Community

TO: All Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

FROM: Thayne McCulloh, Interim President

SUBJ: Preparation for the Annual Flu Season & the H1N1 Flu Virus

DATE: Wednesday, August 26, 2009

By now, virtually everyone has read about and is aware of the perceived threat of the H1N1 (a.k.a. "swine flu") virus. As related in numerous internet and press articles, including yesterday's *Spokesman-Review*, the capacity of the virus to affect millions of people around the country is considered a very real possibility. Further, the nature of the H1N1 appears to place college students in the age-range of those most susceptible to contraction of the virus.

Among those things which are known, thus far, about the virus is the fact that the vast majority of people who contract the H1N1 virus suffer symptoms much like the ordinary seasonal flu. The symptoms, unfortunately, do not appear for at least 24 hours after contagion, so communication of the virus between an infected person and those around them can happen before symptom onset. The high rate of communicability, particularly in close quarters such as residence halls, is what has raised concern at college campuses across the country.

I wanted to inform the GU Community – as we begin this new academic year – that several weeks ago I directed the Vice Presidents to begin working with every dean and department director to begin putting specific, concrete plans in place should an outbreak of the seasonal flu, and/or the H1N1 virus, create challenges to our ability as a university to effectively function. This effort capitalizes on earlier work that was done when the Avian Flu was perceived a threat in 2007. The Vice Presidents have been, or will be, in communication with their respective faculty and employee groups regarding these plans – and specific actions which should be taken – as the fall semester begins.

Specific Actions:

As with any potential communicable disease threat, the first line of defense is prevention. The H1N1 is principally communicated via the large expelled droplets from sneezes and coughs; consistent, one-time use and disposal of facial tissues is considered the best method of capture. It is advised that beyond the frequent washing of hands and use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer, individuals who work at desks and computers also frequently wipe down their desk surfaces and keyboards with antibacterial wipes.

Although the vaccine for the H1N1 is currently in development and not yet available, the regular seasonal flu vaccine is currently available through pharmacies and medical providers. Our own Health Center will make the flu vaccine available to students for \$5.00 per shot beginning this Friday and Saturday morning, and continue administration through the month of September. If the inventory is not exhausted by the end of September, the Health Center then expects to make the vaccine available to employees. (On a related note: the University has advocated to become a Point-of-Distribution [POD] for the H1N1 vaccine once it becomes available; it is not yet known whether our POD designation will be approved.)

Additional updates regarding preventative steps to take and the University's response to the annual Flu Season & the H1N1 Flu Virus will be available at the Health Center's web site:

www.gonzaga.edu/healthcenter Further guidance regarding sick day/sick leave protocol, and the support of students who, of necessity, should stay in bed (and away from class) will be provided in subsequent communications. However, the CDC is urging that individuals who come down with flu symptoms **stay at home until 24 hours after the fever resolves.**

It is our obvious hope that the H1N1 virus, and similar flu viruses, will affect only a small number of students and employees in the coming months. The probability of communication of the H1N1 virus, and certainly the seasonal flu, is very high. Anything that you can do to assist in reducing the transmission of disease – particularly reinforcing with our students to be intentional about managing their own behavior – will meaningfully contribute to a successful effort.

Thank you.