



TO: UNIVERSITY FACULTY
SUBJECT: STUDENT ABSENTEEISM REGARDING COVID-19
FROM: *PROVOST OFFICE*
MAR. 6, 2020

In light of recent COVID-19 (formerly the 2019 Novel Coronavirus) developments, we wanted to offer guidance on how to handle any possible surge in absenteeism resulting from illness. Our first priority remains the health and well-being of members of our community.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "...for most of the American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low." Nevertheless, organizations are advised to plan for possible widespread infections, including the possibility that increased absenteeism and illness might affect their ability to maintain normal operations.

Should we experience widespread cases of COVID-19 in Northeastern Pennsylvania, students, faculty and staff would likely be directly and indirectly affected. The CDC advises that to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses anyone who might be experiencing flu-like symptoms should stay home, self-isolate until their symptoms have passed (7-14 days), and seek medical advice.

Students, faculty and staff experiencing flu-like symptoms need to rest and not attend class or report to work. Additionally, and of equal importance, members of the community who have flu-like symptoms are more contagious, placing others at risk if they maintain their normal schedule.

Some students might be worried about missing class or labs and, as a result, might feel pressure to attend. I want to assure members of the faculty that you are empowered to ask students not to attend class if they are not well and to ask visibly sick students to leave class. Students should always be encouraged to seek medical attention from Student Health Services.

Additionally, I want to ask members of the faculty to consider your own contingency plans for classes and labs should you or a member of your immediate family become ill, leaving you unable to continue teaching while you or they recover. I will be

working with the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence and ITR to provide additional support and resources for this contingency.

The Incident Management Team and President's Cabinet have been and will continue to monitor the situation, and will provide updates as warranted by changing circumstances.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jeff Gingerich
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs