

From:	Catherine P. Koshland, Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education (campus-wide)
Subject:	2015-01-16 Rise in Influenza Cases on Campus January 2015

Dear Colleagues,

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) influenza is widespread across much of the United States. So far this year, seasonal influenza A H3N2 viruses have been most common. Historically there often are more severe flu illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths during seasons when these viruses predominate. Increasing the risk of a severe flu season is the CDC finding that roughly half of the H3N2 viruses analyzed are drift variants: viruses with antigenic or genetic changes that make them different from that season's vaccine virus. This means the [vaccine's ability to protect](#) against those viruses may be reduced, although vaccinated people may have a milder illness if they do become infected and vaccination is still recommended.

**We anticipate a rise in influenza cases on campus as the students return from Winter Break.** To help reduce the burden of influenza on the Berkeley campus, the Tang Center is advising students with flu-like illness to follow CDC recommendations for self-isolation until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of fever. Flu shots are still available by appointment at the Tang Center. Please go to: <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/home/news/flushots.shtml> for more information or call [510-643-7177](tel:510-643-7177).

The Academic Senate and the administration have developed the following guidelines to help instructors respond to students who become ill:

- **Announce to students that they should not come to class if they become ill.** The University has adopted the CDC recommendation that members of the campus community who develop flulike illness should self-isolate until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of fever without the use of medication. Let your students know that they should follow this recommendation in deciding whether or not to come to class.
- **Use flexibility and good judgment in excusing student absences and waive requirements for written excuses from medical personnel.** Many healthy people with influenza experience a mild to moderate illness and recover without the need to seek medical attention but still need to be isolated until the fever is resolved. Therefore, instructors are asked to waive any requirement for written excuses in their courses. This action will assist in boosting University Health Service's capacity to treat students that actually need medical evaluation and treatment.
- **Be prepared to offer accommodation to students who must miss exams or assignment deadlines due to illness.** Have a plan for handling requests to make up work that maintains fairness and equity. Recognize that in some instances work or exams may simply need to be excused or an alternative assignment substituted. Consider how you might use educational technologies to allow students to work from home once they are feeling better but are still self-isolating.

The administration will be monitoring flu cases on campus closely as the semester progresses and will issue appropriate communications. In the meantime, instructors are urged to be flexible in dealing with student absences.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining the health of the campus community. [Resources for faculty](#) have been posted on the Center for Teaching and Learning web site: [teaching.berkeley.edu](http://teaching.berkeley.edu). If you have questions, please contact [teaching@berkeley.edu](mailto:teaching@berkeley.edu) with the subject line "Flu Guidelines."

Best,

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Panos Papadopoulos  
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