

Supporting Teaching During a Pandemic Flu Season FAQ for MU Department Chairs

Your role as department chair will be vital in helping to organize and encourage teaching during a pandemic flu season. Having a contingency and communication plan for teaching key sections in your department may provide the needed continuity for students and your faculty. The following questions and checklists may provide ideas to consider.

1. How do I encourage instructors to start preparing for teaching through a pandemic flu season?
2. What can I do to help our instructors and staff members receive common information and communicate as a group?
3. How should we plan for a significant number of instructors not attending their classes?
4. What should I do if MU cancels face-to-face classes until the threat of flu is reduced in Columbia?

How do I encourage instructors to start preparing for teaching through a pandemic flu season?

MU instructors are being encouraged to create an online experience for those who cannot attend class. (See *Teaching During a Pandemic Flue Season – Ideas to Consider* for MU instructors.) The following are recommendations for how department chairs can support teaching efforts:

- Facilitate Blackboard training for instructors in your department.** ET@MO offers campus-wide training workshops or you may schedule a workshop for your own department. Individual faculty may also attend ET@MO's Open Studio hours.
- Ask instructors with Blackboard expertise to assist colleagues** in putting together a Blackboard course site.
- Identify instructors who do not have computer access at home. Find loaner laptops** for these faculty if they need to continue teaching from home.
- Brainstorm alternative options for teachers of very large courses** (i.e., Wimba audio, Tegrity audio or video, etc.)
- Assist instructors who require specialized software with alternative options** for instructor and student access at home (i.e., license agreements, USB drives for transporting software, etc.)

What can I do to help our instructors and staff members receive common information and communicate as a group?

- Request a Blackboard organizational site for the faculty and staff in your department.** Go to <http://courses.missouri.edu> and select "Request organization site" in the Blackboard section.
- Practice and become familiar with using Blackboard tools** that fit with your communication needs for faculty and staff in the department (i.e., the discussion board, posting materials, chat, white-board, etc.) You, as well as an administrative staff member, should learn about these tools so that there will be back-up during an emergency situation. Blackboard help can be found at <http://courses.missouri.edu>, select the "Faculty help" link under the Blackboard section.

How should we plan for a significant number of instructors not attending their classes?

- Continue face-to-face teaching by arranging replacement teachers** where needed and appropriate.
- Identify core courses that have multiple sections and multiple instructors. Create a peer-instructor plan** so they will be able to cover for those who are too sick to continue teaching their class. Encourage peer instructors to share their teaching plans, materials, and access to their online course sites.
- Identify retirees or older instructors who might be willing to step in and teach courses** for ill instructors. Experts predict that many individuals over 50 may be at a much lower risk of contracting the H1N1 virus than younger people.
- Encourage instructors to share teaching and learning ideas with each other.** The added support will help encourage teachers in a difficult situation.

What should I do if MU cancels face-to-face classes until the threat of flu is reduced in Columbia?

- Follow MU policies and guidelines.**
- Maintain communication with your department's faculty, TA's, and graduate instructors.**
- Keep your faculty and staff updated on the progress of the flu season** via the department's Blackboard site.