July 27, 2009

Dear Families:

As a new academic year approaches I am writing to bring you up to date on our campus planning and readiness for the possibility that the H1N1 flu virus, which has been spread across the globe, will re-emerge on college and university campuses during the annual flu season.

Health experts believe that a resurgence of the H1N1 flu is possible during our academic year and planning should reflect that reality. Our immediate goal is to be very proactive with students about staying healthy through hand washing, good eating and sleeping habits, covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, limiting any social contact when not feeling well and staying in bed when they are ill. The College’s Health Center and Professor Marion Fass’ class on infectious diseases will be doing extensive health education activities and programs throughout the year. We are also encouraging all students, faculty and staff to get the H1N1 flu vaccination when it becomes available. Please encourage your son or daughter to get the vaccination at home or on campus when it is available. Students receiving the vaccination on campus will be able to charge it to their accounts. We also encourage your son or daughter to be immunized against the annual flu. This vaccination will be available on campus this fall.

In the event students become ill we will be encouraging them to leave campus for home or stay with friends or relatives to recover for a period of time to be determined by infectious disease specialists. If distance makes it impossible to return home we will designate a site for quarantining students for a limited period of time. Social distancing is a best practice for limiting the spread of the virus but the number of spaces available outside of our residence halls is very limited. Developing a plan for where your son or daughter might go in the event she/he gets sick is something we are encouraging families to do before the start of the fall semester. Students will be advised to keep in contact with their professors to ensure they keep as up to date as possible with their course work but we want to emphasize the importance of staying in their rooms and avoiding contact with others if they are feeling ill.

The College maintains constant contact with local, state and federal agencies as well as the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. As information or recommendations for preventing the spread of disease is received we will share this information with the campus community on our website and through emails to students, faculty and staff. Hopefully a campus shutdown will never be necessary, however we are preparing for that eventuality during our planning sessions this summer. If the State or Rock County Health Departments informs us that we must close the College for a period of time due to an outbreak of the H1N1 flu we will communicate this information as quickly as possible through our new communication system described below and on our website www.beloit.edu.
Important to the planning I’ve described, the College has purchased a new campus emergency system which is being installed this summer to notify students, faculty and staff in the unlikely event we experience a campus emergency. We have partnered with Connect ED, an electronic communication system
https://www.blackboardconnected.com/about/HED/home.html?z=20090721072714
which will provide us with the capacity to notify students, faculty and staff about a campus emergency, tornado warning, pandemic, etc. with instructions about what they should do to ensure their health and safety. This system is capable of notifying individuals quickly through cell phones, text messaging, email and room phones. We will be asking students to provide us with their information for emergency notification and we ask your assistance in urging your son or daughter to make sure their emergency notification information is up to date. *The best way to accomplish this is for students to log on to their Web Advisor account and add or edit their contact information.*

Thank you for your help and attention to the above information which we hope will not be needed during the coming year; however, we want you to know we are prepared in the event we are faced with an emergency such as a campus outbreak of the H1N1 virus.

Sincerely,

Bill Flanagan
Vice President for Student Affairs and
Dean of Students

HELPFUL LINKS
Center for Disease Control (CDC)  http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/
Rock County Health Department  http://www.co.rock.wi.us/Dept/Health/services.htm
World Health Organization (WHO)  http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/