Dear Colby-Sawyer Faculty and Staff,

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new and returning colleagues and express our hope that you’ve all enjoyed the summer and are looking forward to an exciting, productive new academic year. As classes begin, we’d like to share some important health information to ensure that our community is well informed and prepared for the year ahead.

As many of you know, the novel influenza H1N1, formerly known as swine flu, continues to affect people worldwide, and the number of cases in the United States is expected to increase in the fall and winter. The H1N1 is now officially a “pandemic” because it has spread worldwide. Pandemic severity is ranked from 1 to 5. To date, fortunately, the H1N1 is categorized “1” – mild in severity.

College communities, in which students, faculty and staff live and work together in close proximity, must be especially vigilant in preventing and responding appropriately to cases of communicable illnesses such as the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued new recommendations for higher education communities about how to both prevent flu infections and handle possible cases. We are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu at Colby-Sawyer College but we will need your help to accomplish this.

We are working closely with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services and the town of New London to monitor flu conditions in the state and beyond and prepare for potential cases of the flu. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available. Here are a few things you can do to try to keep yourself and others healthy.

- **Practice good hygiene** by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.

- **Practice respiratory etiquette** by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.

- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** The symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus are similar to those of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people with the H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. (A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius.)

- **Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever** (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have...
chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Don’t go to class or work if you have a fever.

- **Talk with your health care providers about whether you should be vaccinated for seasonal flu.** If you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you should consider getting the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes. We will know more as new information is provided.

**Groups Identified as At Risk for H1N1**

The groups the CDC has identified as higher risk for this flu virus and recommended to receive the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine when it becomes available include the following:

- **Pregnant women** are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;

- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than six months of age** because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;

- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel** because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity;

- **All people from six months through 24 years of age:**
  - **Children from six months through 18 years of age** because the CDC has seen many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in children, and they are in close contact with each other in school and daycare settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spreading.
  - **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age** because the CDC has tracked many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in healthy young adults. They often live, work and study in close proximity to others, and they are a frequently mobile population.

- **People aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.**

**What if Flu Season Becomes Severe?**
If this year’s flu season becomes more severe, the college will consider taking the following additional steps to prevent the spread of the virus:

- **Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever** (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Don’t go to class or work if you have a fever.

- **Allow students, faculty and staff at higher risk for complications to stay home.** These students, faculty, and staff should make this decision in consultation with their healthcare provider.

- **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in classrooms such as moving desks farther apart, leaving empty seats between students, holding outdoor classes, and using distance learning methods. This may include curtailing or cancelling extra-curricular activities.

- **Extend the time sick students, faculty or staff stay in their residence halls or homes.** During severe flu conditions sick people should stay home for at least seven days, even if they feel better sooner. Those who are still sick after seven days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away. Symptoms of flu include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea or vomiting.

- **Suspend classes.** While unlikely, given current recommendations to continue operations with the protections identified above in place, this decision - if necessary - will be made together with local and state public health officials. The length of time classes should be suspended will depend on the specific goal for the decision, as well as the severity and extent of illness on campus. We are currently discussing the potential of developing plans for hosting classes remotely, using various online resources such as Blackboard and e-mail.

Students were recently sent a similar letter about how to try to prevent flu infection and what to do if they become ill. We are urging students with flu symptoms to go home when possible or isolate themselves in their rooms for at least 24 hours after their fever resolves, but students must check in with faculty via e-mail and do the required work. Faculty will need to consider what to do if you become ill for ensuring the continuity of your lesson plans. Please review the letter to students on our home page at [www.colby-sawyer.edu](http://www.colby-sawyer.edu) to learn the details of our recommendations to them.

**Other Important Resources for Learning More**

To learn more, please visit Baird Health and Counseling Center's Flu Update site at [www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/bhcc/fluupdate.html](http://www.colby-sawyer.edu/campus-life/bhcc/fluupdate.html). The college will also post Health Alerts on the home page at [www.colby-sawyer.edu](http://www.colby-sawyer.edu) as needed. Other timely sources of information include the following links:
We have encouraged students, and suggest that faculty and staff who believe they are at higher risk of medical complications, contact their personal physicians for additional guidance for the upcoming flu season. We will notify you by e-mail or on the college’s Web site of any additional information and strategies to prevent the spread of flu on our campus. Each of us should actively follow the recommendations above and strive to stay healthy and well informed. Let’s enjoy a healthy and productive semester.

Sincerely,

Pam Spear, Director, Baird Health and Counseling Center

Dave Sauerwein, Vice President for Student Development, Dean of Faculty

Pete Berthiaume, Director, Campus Safety

Kimberly Slover, Director, College Communications