



THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Assembly Standing Committees on Health, Labor, Education, Higher Education, and the Subcommittee on Workplace Safety

Public Hearing

on

H1N1 Influenza

Testimony of

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University**

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October 13, 2009

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Assemblymembers Gottfried, John, Nolan, Glick, Lancman and distinguished members of the Assembly, my name is Edward Engelbride and I am the Senior Assistant Provost for University Life and Enrollment Management at the State University. On behalf of Chancellor Zimpher I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide information about the State University's efforts to protect the health and safety of our students to you today. Joining me today is Dr. Kathleen Camelo, Director of the Student Health Center at our Plattsburgh campus. In addition to being the Director of the Student Health Center, Dr. Camelo is also president of the Student Health Services Council within the State University.

As you are aware, the State University serves a diverse student body of over 430,000 students statewide with over 80,000 living in campus residence halls. I am pleased to begin by reporting that, so far, the H1N1 flu has had minimal impact on our campuses.

Due to the potential seriousness of the H1N1 virus, and the possibility that it could disproportionately impact campus populations, last month Chancellor Zimpher directed each SUNY campus President to report on a daily basis the number of students with symptoms of Influenza Like Illness (ILI) at their campus to System Administration. An internal system to gather and analyze this data has been created, and is monitored daily. This provides us with valuable situational awareness to identify early changes in incidence. With over 430,000 students, most campuses are reporting zero to less than five new cases of ILI per day. For the most recent week, the average daily number of new cases of ILI in the State University was 83.

In addition, Chancellor Zimpher has formed a special SUNY H1N1 medical advisory group consisting of physicians and others health experts from SUNY's Academic Health Centers and the Student Health Centers. Internationally known experts on infectious diseases, public health and other disciplines are available to provide assistance to campuses, address concerns and advise the Chancellor as appropriate. This group also reviews data reported by campuses and advises System Administration regarding necessary follow-up.

The reporting system and the medical advisory group complement existing efforts at SUNY to respond to issues like H1N1.

Specifically, in order to monitor and respond to the H1N1 flu, this past Spring we called together our existing University-wide emergency planning group comprised of campus experts in student health services, environmental health, emergency planning, and university police, along with several System Administration officials. The group was able to quickly build upon work done in 2006 to prepare for Avian flu, and in 2008 when

a University-wide procedure required our campuses to have emergency response plans that included specific provisions for pandemic flu.

These earlier efforts helped us this spring as the H1N1 virus began to spread across the country and our campuses started implementing their emergency response plans.

Since Spring, this group has been meeting regularly to provide guidance to the campuses, monitor information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and to coordinate with state agencies such as the Department of Health (DOH) and the State Emergency Management Office (SEMO).

One of the very first efforts of this group was to issue a series of guidance documents to the campuses to assist their local planning. While these documents were initially drafted in 2006, it was necessary to revise them for the specifics of the H1N1 flu. These documents covered topics such as:

- ✓ Suspension of Activity on Campus
- ✓ Social Distancing
- ✓ Travel by Students and Faculty/Staff during a Public Health Emergency
- ✓ Use of Facilities for Emergency Purposes
- ✓ Essential Functions during an Emergency
- ✓ Stockpiling of Supplies

The University-wide group also modified and re-issued to the campuses the planning template for dealing with a flu pandemic.

We also held a very successful symposium on the H1N1 flu for our colleges on September 14th that attracted 167 participants from 54 colleges. Speakers from the CDC and the Department of Health were able to provide especially relevant information, and a higher education expert from Carnegie Mellon University was able to describe their planning and response to a severe outbreak of H1N1 on that campus. Presentations and discussions covered a number of topics from procedures for acquiring the vaccine to the legal ramifications of a flu outbreak.

Finally, workshops were held at Utica and Farmingdale on respiratory protection, including fit testing protocols for respirators. Many campuses participated in these events.

As you know, Influenza like illness includes a broad range of symptoms including a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, vomiting or diarrhea. Students with several of these symptoms would be classified as having ILI. It is important to point out that not all students with Influenza Like Illness have the H1N1 flu. These symptoms are the same as those for seasonal flu and we are quickly approaching, if not already in, the first wave of seasonal flu when counts start to increase. As previously stated, reported incidence of ILI on SUNY campuses has been low.

A university-wide informational website was made available for sharing information related to the H1N1 flu with recommendations for limiting the spread of the disease among individuals, links to other websites such as the CDC and the DOH, and specific references to guidance for colleges and universities. This website complemented the websites that most campuses also established.

As you know the H1N1 vaccine will be available over the next few weeks. Our campuses have been working closely with their local county health departments to be able to provide the vaccine to our campus communities.

While a number of steps have been taken at a university-wide level, campuses are at the front line of dealing with this disease. Our campuses have engaged in many efforts such as:

- Providing prevention information in various formats
- Enhanced education and outreach to their campus communities
- Implementation of protocols to reduce transmission
- Expansion of respiratory protection efforts
- Review of emergency planning protocols
- Increased surveillance to identify ill students
- Protocols to support ill students and work with family members
- Exploring alternative housing for ill students

We have taken many actions to prepare for and respond to the 2009 H1N1 virus. We hope that we will not need to take additional steps, but we are ready if it is necessary to do so.

We would be glad to respond to any questions that you have.



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Chancellor's H1N1 Medical Advisory Group

Dr. Mary Applegate, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Public Health University at Albany

Dr. Kathleen Camelo, Director of Student Health Services, SUNY Plattsburgh

Dr. Susan Donelan, Medical Director, Healthcare Epidemiology Department, Assistant Professor, Infectious Disease, Stony Brook University

Dr. David Dunn, Vice President for Health Sciences, University at Buffalo

Dr. Shelley Gilroy, Professor of Medicine and Hospital Epidemiologist, Upstate Medical University

Dr. Pascal Imperato, Distinguished Service Professor and Dean, School of Public Health, Downstate Medical Center

Dr. Richard Moose, Director of Student Health Services, SUNY Potsdam

Donna Mueller, Director of Health Services, Monroe Community College