Dear Colleague,

We hope you have been receiving and following UMBC’s communications related to influenza and COVID-19, also known as coronavirus. We know that many of you in our community are concerned about the health of your students and we are writing to provide additional guidance on working with students who may be unwell.

First, we ask that faculty make allowances for students who are unable to come to campus or class because of illness. We also ask that instructors do not require students to present a doctor’s note in order to be granted an excused absence, given that not all cases of influenza or flu-like illness require a doctor’s care.

Second, we have received questions from instructors about how to respond if a student attends class while displaying symptoms, especially given that there have been cases at other universities where, in such circumstances, students have felt discriminated against because of their ethnicity or choice to wear a medical mask. The final decision about whether to attend class or seek medical attention is up to each student. However, as is always the case, you should feel free to express a supportive and private concern about the student’s well-being and remind any student that they are allowed to miss class if they are unwell. In addition, a proactive reminder to all your students about your ability to be flexible when they are unwell and how to communicate with you if they are unable to attend class may be helpful. I know that we all want to make sure that every one of our students feels welcome and supported by our campus community.

The university is closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 and working with the Baltimore County Health Department to understand the risks to our community. Please stay current on the university’s response by visiting this website, which is updated regularly. Faculty members with questions about our work with students, faculty, and staff returning from infected areas where the COVID-19 is active or who are considering travel to such areas should contact David Di Maria, Associate Vice Provost for International Education, at 410-455-2624. If you have concerns about an unwell student, please contact Bruce Herman, Director of University Health Services, at 410-455-2542.

Provost Philip Rous