

H1-N1 Influenza Pandemic Response

For most of us, the H1-N1 influenza pandemic of 2009 is as close as we have ever come to a situation like we face today with coronavirus. That year, one of our principal consultants was the business school dean at a moderate-sized college in the northeast. Well ahead of the flu season, the top management group began to meet and went through what essentially was a Scenario Planning process relating to the H1-N1 virus. They had guidelines as to what the potential outcomes could be for our campus. They worked their way through a number of possibilities from the closing of campus for short periods of time to suspension of campus activities for the remainder of a semester or the academic year. These discussions began at their pre-fall semester retreat and continued at regular president's cabinet meetings throughout the year. Detailed response plans were developed for each of several scenarios. Fortunately, they did not have an outbreak on campus, but they were prepared for the worst. A couple of actions that they took exemplify the preparedness that came from the planning process.

- Prior to that year, only about sixty percent of their faculty/courses employed a Learning Management System or were online. They had been pushing faculty members to develop LMS sites for all of their courses, but many individuals were just not interested. Preparation for H1-N1 included a goal of getting 100 percent of courses into the LMS—they missed that goal, but they did get above 95 percent. Unquestionably, this improved these courses and increased faculty acceptance of both LMS sites and online education.
- In the course of planning to operate classes online and the campus from individuals' homes, the CIO asked, "What if my staff comes down with the flu?" While all of them chuckled at their oversight, they began to plan for an alternate site for maintenance of the LMS and critical campus systems. This site was in addition to the backup site to protect against a natural disaster—it was close to campus and had a simpler design. It would have been critical, however, if a large percentage of IT staff had become sick.