September 3, 2009

TO: All UCM Faculty Members
FROM: Office of the Provost
SUBJECT: University Class Attendance Policy: Temporary Modifications for AY 2009-10

Background

The purpose of this memo is to notify all UCM faculty members of temporary modifications to the University Class Attendance Policy that are in effect for Academic Year 2009-10. These temporary policy modifications have been reviewed and approved by the provost, deans and Vice President for Student Affairs.

For AY 2009-10, the University Class Attendance Policy is modified in accordance with guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in response to the potential for influenza outbreaks. A primary concern of the CDC guidelines, and of the temporary policy described in this memorandum, is to encourage behaviors that limit exposure to highly infectious disease. The following is an excerpt from CDC’s Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-10 Academic Year:

Review and revise, as needed, policies, such as student absenteeism policies and sick leave policies for faculty and staff that make it difficult for students, faculty, and staff to stay home when they are ill or to care for an ill family member. For students, consider altering policies on missed classes and examinations and late assignments so that students' academic concerns do not prevent them from staying home when ill or prompt them to return to class or take examinations while still symptomatic and potentially infectious. Do not require a doctor's note for students, faculty, or staff to validate their illness or to return to work, as doctor's offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

University Class Attendance Policy, AY 2009-10

The University Class Attendance Policy states the following regarding students’ rights to complete make-up work associated with absence from class (Undergraduate Catalog, p. 18). (Underlining/bolding of text is added for reference purposes.)

Make-up of course requirements missed because of extenuating circumstances shall be worked out between the instructor and the student upon the student’s initiative. Instructors are required to allow the student the opportunity to earn full credit for missed work when a student is absent because of participation in approved university activities, university programs (that the student is required to attend), or when absence is required by order of a qualified physician. A student must contact his/her instructor on the first day the student returns to class.

For AY 2009-10, the following statement supersedes the underlined/bolded statement in the above:

During Academic Year 2009-10, instructors are required to allow the student the opportunity to earn full credit for missed work when the student is absent due to illness. Students may self-document absence due to illness without the requirement of additional documentation from a physician or a university administrative office. Instructors may require a student to leave a class session if the instructor believes that the student is ill and presents a potential threat to the health of other class members. In such cases, the student will be allowed to complete make-up work to earn full credit for missed work.
Interpretation and Application of the Temporary Policy

- A student shall be allowed to complete make-up work, without penalty, due to absence because of illness. The student is not required to provide a statement from a physician or from a university administrative office.

- Although a statement from a physician or university administrative office is not required, the instructor may require the student to provide a written statement affirming that the absence was due to illness.

- As stated in the current University Class Attendance Policy, a student must contact the instructor on the first day he/she returns to class to be eligible to complete such make-up work.

- The opportunity to complete make-up work without penalty does not relieve student of obligation to meet all course requirements. Faculty members may set appropriate and reasonable requirements and deadlines for completion and submission of make-up work.

- The modified policy explicitly empowers instructors to require a student to leave class if the instructor believes that the student is ill and presents a potential threat to the health of other class members.

- Recovery from H1N1 influenza typically requires 7 to 10 days. H1N1 infection does not typically recur, although infection with other influenza strains is possible. If a faculty member suspects that a student has abused the privilege extended by the modified policy, the faculty member may report the student to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action.

- In addition to the above, faculty members are encouraged to notify department chairs if they observe inordinately high absence rates in their classes. Such information will be useful in monitoring the potential need to undertake institution-wide emergency measures.

- Please contact your department chair or dean if you have questions about the AY 2009-10 temporary policy modifications.

- This memo is not intended to answer all questions about university actions in response to the potential for influenza outbreaks. For university updates see http://www.ucmo.edu/uhc/h1n1.cfm.