

Mtro. Francisco Marmolejo Cervantes
Executive Director
Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC)

Dear Professor Marmolejo,

I would like to inform you about the measures taken by Universidad Veracruzana, institution I have the privilege to lead, in relation to your May 3rd message about the impact on higher education due to the health contingency caused by the influenza A H1N1 virus.

In the particular case of Universidad Veracruzana (UV), three Spanish programs scheduled in May were cancelled; besides the return of a few undergraduate students to the United States and Canada.

The number of participants at the summer program offered by the School for Foreign Students, one of the main programs in this school, has dramatically decreased due to the concern for this sickness. The summer program usually hosts about 100 students from the United States; there were only about 50 students up to last week.

We understand our colleagues' concern about the safety and health of their students. However, we feel that some decisions have been taken without completely knowing the real situation in Mexico; this is taking into consideration truthful and reliable information.

It is important to point out that no single person has been reported sick in all Universidad Veracruzana, not one in the five campuses throughout the state of Veracruz. The vast majority of foreign students who decided to stay and continue their studies here are our most trustworthy and immediate testimony.

Nevertheless, we have attentively followed the health recommendations issued by the Health Secretariat and the Public Education Secretariat. They have given us guidelines to properly face this situation.

Likewise, the School for Foreign Students has continuously kept in touch with the foreign students who are in our institution right now in order to keep them well informed.

As an example, we have been in constant communication with our partner institutions. All enrolled foreign students received the sanitary suggestions given by the federal authorities and they were notified about the May 7th return to school. They were informed about making up for the missed time.

As for the students who went back to their countries, we let them and their universities know that we respected their decision and that we would do anything within our possibilities to help them finish their courses in absentia. The communication with our international partners has been clear, constant, and it remains open.

All the UV community has had permanent information to properly face this contingency. Our web page (www.uv.mx) is constantly brought up to date taking into consideration the measures taken, at federal, state and local levels. It also has links to the official websites of the federal departments involved in this situation.

The preventive measures that our university has adopted cover all the communities and cities where UV is present. Our regular university brigades have become informative brigades for epidemiologic watchfulness. Likewise, the University Houses in rural areas have been very active locally and have followed the preventive guidelines suggested by the corresponding health and education institutions.

The 108 community social agents (coordinadores de vinculacion) that work in the five UV campuses have become direct links with the health measures while supervising and promoting proper hygiene in schools, institutes, and research centers. These agents have contacted the closest authorized clinic to diagnose AH1N1 influenza. They have helped people get organized and establish health screenings, as well as prediagnose, identify and properly direct suspect cases.

Universidad Veracruzana agrees with CONAHEC that this situation is a regional phenomenon affecting the three countries that make up North America. Therefore, it recognizes that we must find common actions among the involved parties.

Universidad Veracruzana has stated our total resolution to offer and guarantee healthy and safe conditions to all UV and partner institutions' students, faculty, and researchers. We will provide the required information to help develop our academic functions. It would be lamentable to affect our international cooperation activities and relationships due to misinformation.

Universidad Veracruzana reiterates its desire to continue working together in common projects. UV is at your disposition to present the additional information our colleagues may require.

Thank you for your attention and understanding, please receive our warm regards.

Yours truly,

Raúl Arias Lovillo
Rector de la Universidad Veracruzana