

George Brown College
Pandemic Influenza Plan

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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction and Purpose
- 2.0 Planning Approach
- 3.0 Pandemic Influenza – General Information
- 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities
- 5.0 GBC Pandemic Plan Levels
- 6.0 Programs / Operations Requiring Special Consideration
- 7.0 Human Resources Issues
- 8.0 Academic Issues
- 9.0 Infection Control Measures
- 10.0 Communication
- 11.0 Education Strategies
- 12.0 Registrar Issues
- 13.0 Student Residence

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The George Brown College Pandemic Influenza Plan has been created in order to assist the college with preparation for the occurrence of an influenza pandemic. This includes implementing preparedness activities that may be undertaken prior to, during and after a declared pandemic.

The plan will identify issues that may be anticipated in the event of a pandemic. Departments identified within the plan will develop specific practices and procedures based on the identified issues. Implementation of the plan with these practices and procedures will ensure the college can continue to provide services in a safe and healthy manner for as long as possible in the event of a pandemic.

1.2 Background Information

Influenza is a common virus that is present in the community, usually on a seasonal basis. An *influenza pandemic* is a worldwide influenza epidemic, resulting in a global health emergency as the population has little or no immunity to the circulating strain.

The World Health Organization (WHO) monitors the outbreak of influenza throughout the world, using a classification system to predict the likelihood of an influenza outbreak reaching pandemic proportions. This phased system guides planning efforts and is incorporated into federal, provincial and municipal plans.

World Health Organization – Phased Response System

On April 2009, the WHO raised there threat alert level for H1N1 (swine flu) from 3 to 4 to 5. On June 11, 2009, the WHO raised the threat level to 6.

Because of the Avian flu (H5N1), Swine flu (H1N1), and past SARS experiences, there is heightened public awareness, including the need for organizations to be prepared for a pandemic stretching for months; with “waves” lasting six to eight weeks. While it is impossible to predict the magnitude of a pandemic, businesses could be faced with an absenteeism rate of 25% or more. This number will be made up of employees who are ill, caring for the ill, or perhaps too vulnerable to leave home. There is also the potential for broken supply chains and consumer panic. The more dire predictions include fuel and food shortages and possible utility failures.

Inter-pandemic phase	Low risk of human cases	1
	Higher risk of human cases	2
Pandemic alert	No or very limited human-to-human transmission	3
	Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission	4
New virus causes human cases	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission	5
	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission	6
Pandemic		

1.3 George Brown College Pandemic Planning Committee

To ensure an effective college response during a pandemic, the college senior

management approved the formation of a Pandemic Planning Committee for the purpose of producing a Pandemic Influenza Plan. Committee members were selected from critical areas, to ensure essential information is included in the plan. The committee is chaired by the Manager, Occupational Health & Safety, who is responsible for preparing the plan, based on the expertise and information provided by committee member

The mandate of the committee is to provide information and make recommendations in order to support the Senior Management Committee, as follows:

1. Identify and address issues that may affect college operations in the event of a pandemic in order to minimize the impact as much as possible.
2. Contribute information and expertise for the purpose of creating a pandemic plan.
3. In the event of a pandemic, monitor the implementation of the plan in order to recommend revised/new procedures.
4. Review and resolve any recommendations/requirements for cancellation of activities or closures.
5. Post-pandemic, address the effectiveness of the plan and recommend changes for future.

An action strategy will need to be created related to each specific pandemic.

1.4 Planning and Preparedness • Government

All three levels of government have published pandemic plans. The City of Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan (2005) is a comprehensive document that addresses all aspects of a potential pandemic, including minimizing societal disruption.

The city's plan predicts between 392,000 and 914,000 individuals living in Toronto will become ill. It further estimates:

- 45% of those ill, will not require medical care
- 53% will require care by their physician
- 1.5 to 2% will require hospitalization
- the death rate is estimated at between .16 and .47%

The college's Pandemic Influenza Plan will harmonize with the City of Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan to ensure overall effectiveness and integration.

2.0 Planning Approach

2.1 General Planning Assumptions

The following planning assumptions have been utilized in the College plan, based on the City of Toronto's Pandemic Influenza Plan:

- The college's Pandemic Influenza Plan is an evolving document. Content will be added as new information is received from substantiated sources.
- The impact of illness will be significant. There will be an anticipated infection rate of 15 – 35% during the first wave of influenza.
- Until the virus is transmitted human•to•human, it is unknown how severe the health impact will be. Symptoms could range from those similar to those exhibited during a seasonal flu outbreak to symptoms that cause severe respiratory symptoms in most individuals.
- Communication of health & safety practices and illness risk prevention strategies will assist in preparing people and reducing panic.
- Absenteeism (student and employee) may exceed 25%.
- College activity will likely need to be curtailed or in some situations cancelled, in order to protect the health and safety of the college community. In an outbreak with significant health symptoms, the college may need to close.
- The nursing program will be impacted more so than other programs due to the relationship between the college and nursing students and the potential effects on the health care system ie: requests from public health for assistance by nursing students, effects on clinical placements, etc.
- The requirement for increased hygiene and infection control practices will be essential. The need for timely and relevant information from a trusted source is essential. Example: Toronto Public Health.
- The psychological impact on the college community will likely be significant.
- Supply chains of resources from many sectors may be disrupted e.g. TTC
- College campuses are located in the city of Toronto necessitating the liaison between the college and the public health unit.
- Additional funding will be required pre-pandemic and during the pandemic in order to provide additional hygiene supplies and food supplies and for the necessary educational campaigns

2.2 Legislative Framework

In the event of a pandemic, the legislation that will apply includes, but is not limited to:

Health Promotion and Protection Act

The Health Promotion and Protection Act requires Boards of Health to provide or ensure the provision of a minimum level of public health programs and services in areas such as control of infectious and reportable diseases, health promotion, health protection and disease prevention. Regulations under the *Act* assist in controlling the spread of communicable and reportable diseases.

Emergency Management Act

The Emergency Management Act establishes the requirements for emergency management programs and plans in Ontario. Municipal bylaws are required in order to adopt the emergency plans.

Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (PHIPA)

PHIPA regulates the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information by health information custodians. Consent is usually required to collect, use or disclose personal health information, however the *Act* specifies situations when this is not required. In the event of a pandemic, disclosure of personal health information to the Chief Medical Officer of Health or Medical Officer of Health without consent is permitted, if for a purpose of the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

Occupational Health and Safety Act

The Occupational Health and Safety Act imposes a general duty on employers to take all reasonable precautions in the circumstance to protect the health and safety of workers. The duties of workers are, generally to work safely and in compliance with the *Act* and Regulations.

2.3 College Policy

The college's Health and Safety Policy shall apply which states in part:

"George Brown College is vitally interested in the health and safety of its employees, students and visitors. Protection of the college community from injury or occupational disease is a major continuing objective. The College will make every effort to provide a safe, healthy work environment."

3.0 Pandemic Influenza – General Information

3.1 Influenza

Influenza, also known as the flu is a common respiratory illness caused by a virus and is highly contagious. It occurs primarily on a seasonal basis. The majority of influenza is transmitted from person-to-person by droplet spread or direct contact. Droplet spread usually occurs by sneezing, coughing, talking or singing. The droplets can spray up to one metre and land directly in the eyes, or be breathed in through the nose or mouth. Direct contact refers to skin-to-skin contact or kissing. For example, shaking hands with someone who has infectious mouth or nose secretions on their hand (perhaps from covering their mouth while coughing) may result in the transfer of the virus.

For most adults, the period of communicability is from approximately 24 hours before, and up to 3-5 days after symptoms develop. The incubation period is typically one to three days but may be as long as a week.

While half of the influenza infections show no symptoms, the other half demonstrate a number of symptoms ranging from mild to severe:

- sudden onset of fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, physical exhaustion, dry cough
 - subsequent onset of sore throat, stuffy or runny nose and worsening cough
 - children may feel nauseous, vomit or have diarrhea
- elderly and those with compromised immune systems may not develop a fever
- Most people will recover in 7-10 days.

For most individuals, the seasonal flu is not life threatening. Those most seriously affected are very young children, individuals with chronic medical conditions and the elderly. This is usually attributed to the increased risk for developing complications, such as pneumonia.

A new influenza vaccine is developed every year based on current and emerging viral strains identified through worldwide surveillance.

3.2 Pandemic Influenza

Pandemic influenza is a worldwide occurrence of influenza, which constitutes a global health emergency. Influenza pandemics have the capability of causing serious illness and mortality as the population has little or no immunity to the circulating strain. Historically, influenza pandemics occur every 35 – 40 years.

A pandemic starts when three conditions have been met:

1. a new influenza virus subtype emerges
2. it infects humans, causing serious illness
3. it spreads easily and sustainably among humans

3.3 Avian Influenza

Avian influenza or the “bird flu” is a contagious disease of animals caused by a virus that normally infects only birds, but has, on rare occasions crossed the species barrier to infect humans. The first recorded instance of human infection with the current strain of avian flu (H5N1) occurred in 1997.

3.4 H1N1 (Swine Flu)

This is a new influenza A(H1N1) virus that has never before circulated among humans. This virus is not related to previous or current human seasonal influenza viruses. As such, this is a virus to which people would have little to no immunity.

The new influenza A(H1N1) appears to be as contagious as seasonal influenza, and is spreading fast particularly among young people (from ages 10 to 45). The severity of the disease ranges from very mild symptoms to severe illnesses that can result in death. The majority of people who contract the virus experience the milder disease and recover without antiviral treatment or medical care. Of the more serious cases, more than half of hospitalized people had underlying health conditions or weak immune systems.

3.5 COVID-19

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections like bronchitis, pneumonia or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV). Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, such as in a household, large gathering, place of worship, school, workplace or hospital.

Symptoms range from common to severe respiratory illnesses, and can include serious conditions, like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death.

At this time, there are no specific treatments or vaccines that protect against coronaviruses.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for influenza surveillance worldwide in order to detect prevalent and emerging strains. In addition, WHO is responsible for coordinating a global response.

Specifically related to pandemic influenza, it is the responsibility of the World Health Organization to:

- conduct world•wide surveillance and reporting of disease
- identify the beginning of a pandemic through the use of the phased response
- co•ordinate global response to a pandemic
- provide recommendations on the management of a pandemic

4.2 Federal – Public Health Agency of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is responsible for coordinating the nation-wide health response to pandemic influenza. PHAC liaises with various international organizations to support surveillance, coordination and investigation activities including those related to vaccine programs. The Prime Minister is responsible for declaring a federal emergency.

4.3 Provincial – Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is responsible for coordinating the province-wide response to an influenza pandemic, including the declaration of a provincial emergency through the Premier.

4.4 Municipal – Toronto Public Health

Although Toronto Public Health (TPH) is the City of Toronto's lead agency in the event of a pandemic, many other departments play critical roles. It is anticipated TPH will provide colleges with information related to pandemic planning and potential services that may be provided during an influenza pandemic. It is the responsibility of the Mayor or designate to declare that an emergency such as a pandemic exists in the municipality.

4.5 College Responsibilities

It is inevitable that changes to most department's operations will be necessary during a pandemic, with some departments being impacted to a greater extent. Approval of the Pandemic Influenza Plan will direct affected departments to prepare and implement practices and procedures in support of the plan.

There will be costs associated with the plan, prior to and during its implementation. Departments who have costs associated with the plan will identify potential costs, track the costs and provide the information to their respective Vice-President.

4.5.1 College Emergency Management

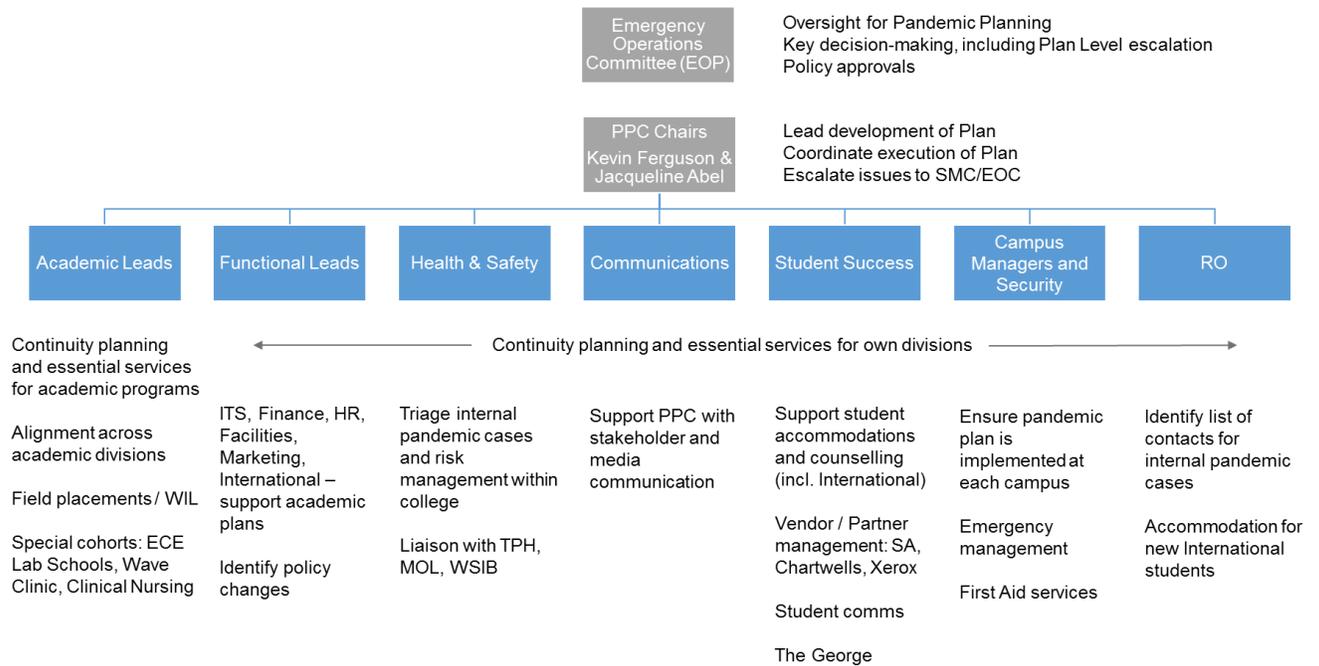
The College Pandemic Influenza Plan falls under the umbrella of the overall college Emergency Response Plan. Strategies and protocols outlined in the Emergency Management Plan will be implemented as necessary.

4.5.2 Incident Management System

The Incident Management System (IMS) is an emergency response model that will be utilized in the event of a pandemic occurrence. The IMS provides a way of coordinating the efforts of departments by identifying resource persons for each area.

Figure 1 illustrates GBC's IMS organization and functions in a pandemic which will allow GBC to coordinate our efforts, integrate our activities with outside agencies, and manage resources during an emergency.

Figure 1. GBC Pandemic Incident Management System – roles and responsibilities



4.5.3 President

- Provide senior leadership and direction to the College in planning, preparedness, and emergency response initiatives.
- Liase with senior government officials and other College Presidents.
- Communication (internal and external) lead in conjunction with the Communications Department.
- Receive recommendations from Senior Management Committee on all aspects of Pandemic Planning and Emergency Response.
- Inform George Brown College Board of Governors on the College's Pandemic Plan, preparedness activities, and details of the execution of the plan in the event of a pandemic as necessary.

4.5.4 Occupational Health & Safety Department:

- The Manager, Occupational Health and Safety is designated as college pandemic coordinator and chairs the Pandemic Committee.
- Actively monitors websites, publications, news releases, etc. of the federal, provincial and municipal health organizations to maintain current knowledge of pandemic preparedness and will act as college liaison with these organizations.
- Ensures educational awareness information sessions are available to promote good health and safety practices
- Produces the College Pandemic Plan and updates as necessary with information and input from the Pandemic Committee. OHS reports pandemic plans through the Executive Director HR to Senior Management Committee.
- Advises the Senior Management Committee regarding pandemic planning, preparedness, and details of the execution of the pandemic plan in the event of a pandemic.

In the event of an influenza pandemic:

- Monitors college activities in order to ensure a safe and healthy work/learning environment and recommend and/or implement corrective action as required.
- Investigates any instances of work refusal by employees, as per OHS Act.
- Ensures distribution of personal protective equipment to employees as recommended by public health officials.
- Provides the necessary links between the College Pandemic Committee and Senior Management Committee.

4.5.5 College Pandemic Committee

The mandate of the committee is to provide information and make recommendations in order to support the senior management committee, as follows:

In the event of a pandemic:

- Identify and address issues that may affect college operations in order to minimize the impact as much as possible.
- Contribute information and expertise for the purpose of creating/revising the pandemic plan.
- Monitor the implementation of the plan in order to recommend revised/new procedures.
- Review and resolve any recommendations/requirements for cancellation of activities or closures. The College requires Council approval for closure as per CCBA.

Post-pandemic:

- Address the effectiveness of the plan and recommend changes for future use.

4.5.6 Communications Department

In regards to this plan, it is the responsibility of the Communications Department to identify and respond to pandemic concerns and issues promptly and to communicate proactively, openly, accurately and consistently with the college's multiple audiences.

The Communications Department will:

- In conjunction with the Occupational Health & Safety department, deliver public health messages to George Brown College students, faculty and staff.
- In conjunction with the Occupational Health & Safety department, develop key messages and methods for communicating potential pandemic crisis situations and immediate responses to George Brown College students, faculty and staff as necessary.
- If a response is needed, inform George Brown College students, faculty and staff of the pandemic crisis and maintain consistent, up-to-date communication with them.
- Co-ordinate pandemic crisis communications with the College's key spokespeople by creating key messages and maintaining consistent, up-to-date communication with the spokespeople.
- Based upon the nature of the pandemic, determine whether a response to the media is necessary and manage media communications.
- Manage post-pandemic communications with the media and George Brown College students, faculty and students.

4.5.7 Facilities Management Department

For the purposes of this plan, it is the responsibility of the Facilities Management Department to ensure buildings are maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition.

The Facilities Management Department will:

- In consultation with the Occupational Health & Safety Department, implement any additional cleaning or sanitizing regimes as recommended by Toronto Public Health.
- Ensure any adjustments to the ventilation systems are implemented, as recommended by Toronto Public Health. This action may be necessary, should the college be required to house ill students on campus.
- Ensure an adequate stockpile of cleaning and sanitizing products is maintained to prevent shortages in the event of disruption to the supply chain.
- Plan for the facilities and contracted staffing issues that will result from an increased demand for maintenance and cleaning services with less human resources, due to the absences of Facilities Management staff.

In the event of a pandemic:

- Implement any additional cleaning/sanitizing regimes as recommended by Toronto Public Health.
- Maintain supply of paper towels in washrooms.
- Install and maintain bulk hand sanitizer units as provided.

- Continue provision of security services

4.5.8 Information Technology

It can be anticipated that reliance on the services of IT will be heightened in the event a pandemic is declared. Accordingly, it is important that services continue

uninterrupted, should this occur.

The Chief Information Officer will:

- Plan operational strategies that will ensure services can be continued for as long as possible, in the event of a pandemic, such as staff cross-training or prioritizing services.

In the event of a pandemic:

- Implement strategies, as necessary.

4.5.9 College Administrators

In regards to this plan, it is the general responsibility of college administrators to provide information to their employees in a timely manner and ensure a priority of work is identified with reduced staff.

In regards to this plan, it is essential that decisions related to a pandemic are consistently applied. Accordingly, any issues that arise from a pandemic should be reported to the appropriate individual as identified in this plan before a decision is communicated.

College administrators will:

- Implement any health initiatives as directed, such as bulk hand sanitizer units.
- Effectively communicate with staff, the pandemic plan and the importance of implemented health initiatives such as hand washing and flu shots.
- Consider the implications of a pandemic when preparing any contracts for services.
- Update business continuity plans

In the event of a pandemic:

- Implement business continuity plans
- Curtail/cancel non-essential activities to limit person-to-person contact. Refer such incidents to the Pandemic Committee.
- Ensure employee attendance system is current in order that statistics regarding employee absences are accurately recorded and available for reporting purposes.
- Report any instance of absence or lateness related to influenza to the Manager of Compensation and Benefits.
- Immediately report any instance of employee work refusal to the Manager, Health and Safety, who will investigate and report as necessary.
- Monitor compliance of any implemented health initiatives.

4.5.10 College Employees

In regards to this plan, it is the responsibility of college employees, as well as the general public to follow any hygiene practices or other direction provided by Toronto Public Health. This information will be made available to the college community through education strategies and other forms of communication (see Communication Section for details).

Due to absenteeism, it can be anticipated that employees will be required to assume different/ additional tasks in accordance with provisions within the respective collective agreements.

While it is impossible to predict exactly how a pandemic will affect operations until the circulating strain is identified, it can be anticipated that the college will remain open. All employees are required to attend work as scheduled, unless they are ill, while the college remains open. Employees must report absences in the manner identified by their department.

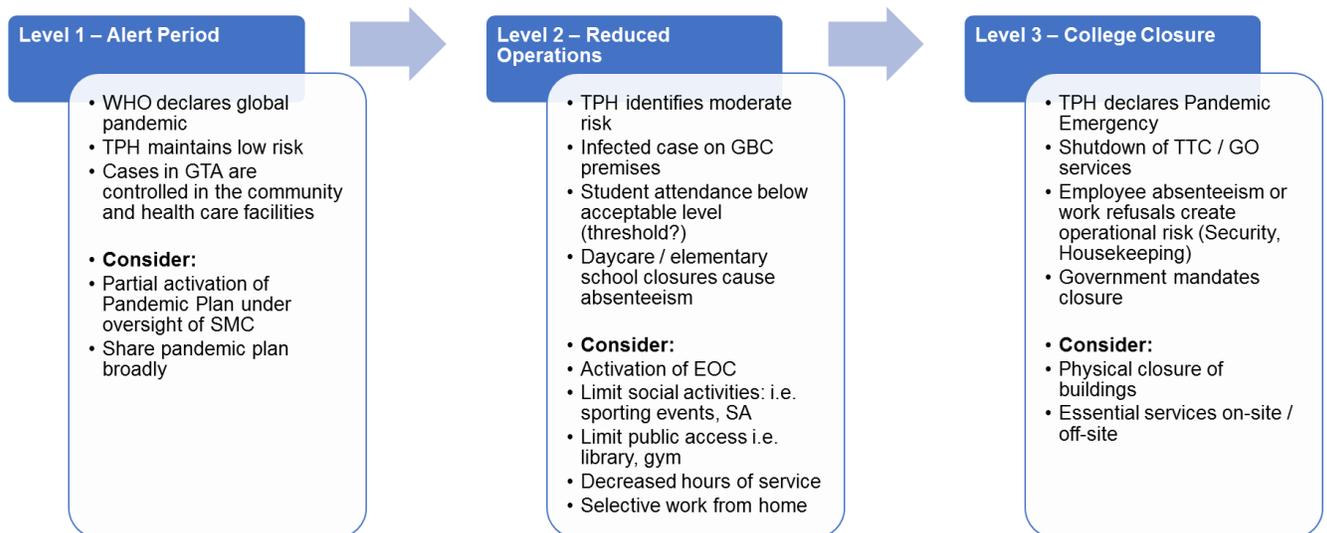
4.5.11 George Brown College Student Association

The Student Association will be involved and consulted through the Student Success team.

4.5.12 Unions

OPSEU Locals 556 and 557 will be involved and consulted through Human Resources.

5.0 GBC Pandemic Plan Levels



5.1 Cancelling Activities

During a pandemic, it is essential to minimize person-to-person contact as much as possible to reduce the likelihood of the transmission of the virus. Individuals are encouraged to maintain a roughly 3 foot distance from each other. This is part of what is known as social distancing.

5.1.1 Student Affairs

College activities requiring person to person contact such as pubs, convocations, varsity games, athletic banquets, business meetings, etc. should be rescheduled in the interest of public health during individual waves of a pandemic. It can also be anticipated that the staffing required to organize and hold such events may not be sufficient during a pandemic. In addition, in the midst of a wave of a pandemic, the public will choose not to attend functions that contribute to the spread of the virus. This was evident during SARS.

During a pandemic, the Pandemic Committee will review all group events and make recommendations to the Senior Management Committee regarding the feasibility of scheduling the activity. The decision will be based on the current information available from public health officials at that particular time.

5.2 Closing the College

In the event the circulating strain of influenza causes severe illness in many individuals, it will likely be necessary to close the college for a period of time. This decision will be reached in consultation with the College Compensation and Appointments Council, based on recommendations by public health officials.

6.0 Programs/Operations Requiring Special Consideration

6.1 Daycare Operations

It is likely an influenza pandemic will impact the daycare operations, either by employee absence and the need to maintain adequate ratios, or due to the possibility of a high infection rate in the children.

The Managers of Daycare Operations will:

- Maintain communication with the Ministry of Community and Social Services and Toronto Public Health Office to ensure knowledge of pandemic influenza and how it may relate to daycare operations.
- Develop plans to address potential staffing issues.
- In conjunction with Marketing and Communications, develop communications for parents in the event of daycare closure.
- Institute any escalated hygiene practices as recommended by Ministry of Community and Social Services and Toronto Public Health.
- Be aware of any reporting requirements that will be implemented in the event of an influenza pandemic.

In the event of a pandemic:

- Report influenza outbreaks as required.
- Institute any additional hygiene practices as recommended by Toronto public health department.
- Report closures to Pandemic Committee.
- Liaise with Marketing and Communications regarding closure communications.

6.2 Nursing Program

An influenza pandemic will result in some challenges for the nursing programs. During the SARS outbreak, nursing faculty who supervised students in the hospital clinical component of the program were quarantined, as were some of the nursing students. Toronto Public Health has advised that during a pandemic, quarantine will likely only occur for initial cases. Other scenarios could include hospitals suspending the clinical component of the program during a pandemic.

There has been a preliminary suggestion that George Brown College's nursing students could be utilized by Toronto Public Health or by hospitals during a pandemic. While Public Health may ask students to volunteer, the college will not coordinate this activity or recommend such action to students, for liability reasons.

The Dean or Academic Director, Health Sciences or designate will:

- Maintain communication with Toronto Public health officials to ensure the most current information regarding pandemic planning and its potential effect on the nursing program is available.
- Ensure contact information of nursing program students and staff is available should the need arise.

In the event of a pandemic:

- Maintain communications with hospitals to determine how the pandemic will affect the program, identify issues and propose solutions.
- Report outbreaks as required to external agencies.
- Determine how/if the program can continue, should the clinical component be cancelled or student absenteeism becomes problematic.

6.3 Oral Health Programs

The operation of the oral health clinic was impacted during the SARS outbreak as the clinic sees clients from the student, staff, and residential community.

The Dean, Health Sciences or designate will:

- Maintain communication with Toronto Public health officials to ensure the most current information regarding pandemic planning and its potential effect on the oral health program is available.

In the event of a pandemic:

- Report outbreaks as required to external agencies.
- Identify issues and propose solutions.
- Determine how/if the program can continue, should the clinical component be cancelled or student absenteeism becomes problematic.

6.4 Intensive English Program/International Department

Communication and educational plans will need to address the special needs of those for whom English is not the first language. During a pandemic, media coverage may be sensationalized, which can be alarming to anyone, but especially for those who are not readily able to understand the information.

In addition, should the college need to care for ill students, translators may be required.

The Program Manager, IEP will:

- Liaise with the Health & Safety Department and the Marketing and Communications Dept., providing information regarding translation needs for the purposes of planning communication and educational plans.
- Ensure IEP/International students are aware of current information regarding seasonal influenza and pandemic influenza (if necessary).

In the event of a pandemic:

- Ensure social activities are cancelled in order to assist in controlling the spread of infection.
- Communicate with IEP/International students in order to ensure they are receiving relevant information.

6.5 Employees Working Out-of-country

Pre-pandemic, employees who conduct college business out-of-country should visit their travel physician and request information regarding a pandemic influenza kit, which could include a filled prescription for an anti-viral, such as Tamiflu. This would assist employees who were in a country when/if a pandemic is declared, as many countries will not have the product available. In addition, a supply of surgical masks would be beneficial (surgical masks are currently the mask recommended for use during a pandemic outbreak of influenza).

In addition, the Administrator of the department should discuss with employees working out-of-country, the possibility of returning to Canada in the event of a pandemic. It should be noted that once movement towards a declared pandemic, using the WHO alert system starts, it will likely escalate quickly. This necessitates pre-planning and will ensure employees are not affected by potential travel bans.

If an employee working out-of-country cannot travel back to Canada for some reason, perhaps a travel ban, every effort will be made to supply the employee with protective equipment.

In addition, employees working out-of-country should follow the health directives from the Public Health Agency of Canada regarding recommendations for the travelling public. Information related to precautions and food preparation, especially in countries where outbreaks of avian flu are occurring is especially important.

7.0 Human Resources Issues

7.1 Leadership Continuity

7.1.1 College Senior Management

In order to instill a sense of calm to the college community in the event of a pandemic, it is essential a strong leadership presence is evident and maintained. Accordingly, the college senior management will develop a plan that ensures continuity of leadership in the event of a pandemic. In the event of the need to close the college, this aspect is essential as timely implementation of decisions will impact the health and safety of the college community.

7.1.2 Deans, Chairs, Directors

In order to ensure leadership continuity, all Deans, Chairs, Directors will identify an individual who will replace them in their capacity, should they fall ill. Ideally, two replacements will be identified. If a pandemic appears imminent, Deans, Chairs, Directors will ensure their potential replacements are kept apprised of critical departmental activities to ensure a seamless transition, should the need arise.

7.2 Reporting Illness

7.2.1 Employee Absence – requirement for medical documentation supporting absence due to influenza

Consistent with the City of Toronto’s projections, 45% of those who become ill with influenza will not require medical attention by a physician. As such, it will be unlikely that medical documentation to support an absence will be available. In recognition of this fact, the requirement of current college policy to provide medical documentation to support absences of more than five days may be suspended upon declaration of an influenza pandemic.

The College Pandemic Committee, with representation from Human Resources and the Health & Safety Department will monitor this issue and amend procedures, if warranted. Any changes to procedures will be based on recommendations from Toronto Public Health.

7.2.2 Employee Absence – to care for ill family member

In recognition the respective collective agreement may contain provisions for absences due to the necessity of caring for ill family members, it is essential that supervisors notify the Manager of Compensation and Benefits to discuss each instance, on an individual basis. The Manager of Compensation and Benefits will determine how such absences will be recorded.

7.2.3 Employee Absence • public transit service disruptions

In the event public transit is disrupted during a pandemic, some employees may not be able to arrive at work at their regularly scheduled time or may not be in a position to make alternate arrangements.

In recognition that the respective collective agreement may contain provisions for such lateness or absences due to transit disruptions, it is essential that supervisors notify the Manager of Compensation and Benefits to discuss each instance, on an individual basis. The Manager of Compensation and Benefits will determine how such lateness/absences will be recorded.

7.2.4 Reporting Employee Absence – administrator’s responsibilities

Administrators are responsible for the accuracy of reporting employee absences, at the end of each week. Administrators will ensure they adhere to any directive from Human Resources regarding the reporting of such absences.

7.3 Continuity of Services – Human Resources

Human Resources will ensure staff are appropriately cross-trained in the various HR disciplines to ensure continuity of service. The priority of the department will be placed on employee issues resulting from a pandemic.

7.4 College/Union Relations

Due to increased absenteeism during a pandemic, it is essential dialogue between the college and union occur to address such issues as the requirement of backfilling positions, etc. Ideally, an understanding should be reached prior to the declaration of a

pandemic. This aspect of the plan is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department.

7.5 Death of an Employee

In the event of the death of an employee, the procedure for communicating an employee death will be determined by College Senior Management.

7.5.1 Benefits

In the event the strain of influenza causes severe illness, it should be anticipated that death of employee(s) will occur. Human Resources will ensure staff are cross-trained in order that the necessary documentation preparation for benefits can occur in a timely manner.

Managers should ensure timely communication to HR in the event an employee dies in order to ensure timely follow up regarding benefits.

7.6 Employee Assistance Program

Should the health impact of the pandemic be significant, employees will be reminded of the Employee Assistance Program in order to assist them with stress, grief counselling, etc.

7.7 Employees Bringing Children to Work

There is a possibility that public schools may close, in the event the circulating strain of pandemic influenza is causing serious illness, or if there is a significant outbreak within a school or daycare. This will occur upon the direction of the municipal public health office.

In order to limit exposure and maximize infection control, employees will not be permitted to bring their child to work during this period. Further, employees are encouraged to plan for this contingency within their family unit.

7.8 Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

The Occupational Health and Safety Act gives a worker the right to refuse work that he or she believes is unsafe.

The Act sets out a specific procedure that must be followed in a work refusal. These procedures will be followed unless directed by the Ministry of Labour.

8.0 Academic Issues

8.1 Alternative Methods of Curriculum Delivery

Each School/Division will investigate the possibility of alternate methods of delivering curriculum that would reduce the likelihood of person-to-person contact in the event of a pandemic.

Since it is likely that faculty will request such action, each school/division should be

prepared to address the issue and provide factual information if the alternate methods are not a possibility.

8.2 Requirement for Medical Documentation • Students

Consistent with the City of Toronto's projections, 45% of those who become ill with influenza will not require medical attention by a physician. As such, it will be unlikely that medical documentation to support an absence will be available. In recognition of this fact, the requirement of current college policy to provide medical documentation to support absences resulting from influenza may be suspended upon declaration of an influenza pandemic.

The College Pandemic Committee will monitor this issue and amend procedures, if warranted. Any changes to procedures will be based on recommendations from Toronto Public Health. The Pandemic Committee will notify Chairs who in turn will be responsible for notifying all their faculty of procedure changes.

8.3 Excessive Absenteeism in Class/lab

8.3.1 Full-time post secondary programs

While alternate methods of curriculum delivery will be implemented if appropriate in the circumstance, the Program Chair, in consultation with the Program Dean will advise faculty to report any instance where excessive student absenteeism in classes or labs exist.

The Program Chair, in consultation with the Program Dean will determine what action can/should be taken, such as rescheduling or postponement of classes/labs.

8.3.2 Continuing Education and Training

For programs offered through Continuing Education, the Program Chair, in consultation with the Program Dean will advise faculty to report any instance where excessive student absenteeism in classes or labs exist.

The Program Chair, in consultation with the Program Dean will determine what action can/should be taken, such as rescheduling or postponement of classes/labs or make-up classes.

8.4 Handwashing Incorporated into Curriculum

Handwashing is regarded as one of the most effective methods to control the spread of germs. Several programs, such as Nursing, ECE, and the Chef School already have handwashing built into their curriculum. For programs where handwashing would not be a natural fit with the curriculum, the Program Chair should consider the use of a handwashing module made available through Stu•view or Blackboard.

9.0 Infection Control Measures

9.1 Pre-pandemic

The Manager, Health and Safety will:

- Purchase and distribute hand sanitizer units to departments for placement in visible areas for the purpose of infection control and heightening awareness.
- Through communication with administrators, identify staff who come into close contact with the public as part of their duties. Discuss any strategies to reduce or eliminate this requirement.
- Purchase an initial supply of recommended masks (surgical) for potential distribution to employees identified above, upon direction from public health officials.
- Arrange for materials to educate the college community on safe practices.

The Chief Technology Officer will:

- Investigate and recommend any equipment or devices such as, but not limited to, keyboard covers as a means of infection control. Consideration will be given to stocking such items in the college bookstores for sale to students.

The Director, Facilities Management will:

- Ensure that washrooms provide the accepted level of hygiene practices as per the recommendations of Toronto Public Health. This includes the provision of a steady supply of warm water, soap and a regular schedule of washroom sanitizing.

The Marketing and Communications department will:

- Assist in providing key messages, communications materials, and a communication strategy to ensure the various stakeholders receive timely information.

Once a Pandemic is declared by WHO

The Manager, Health and Safety will:

- Purchase an additional supply of masks for potential distribution to affected employees, upon the direction of public health officials.
- Advise senior administration of any recommendations made by Toronto Public Health.

The Director, Facilities Management will:

- Purchase equipment suggested by the Chief Information Officer for potential distribution to employees who regularly share computers, example: front desk staff of registration and financial aid, computer access labs for students.

- Purchase bulk hand sanitizer units for placement in high traffic areas such as Learning Commons, Libraries, Cafeterias and Residences.
- Arrange for the purchase of any equipment or devices as recommended by the Chief Information Officer, for sale in the college bookstores.
- Plan for the necessity of an escalated cleaning procedure to be initiated if the Pandemic Alert System reaches 6. This will include increased sanitizing of frequent touch surfaces.

9.2 Pandemic with service/program disruption

The Manager, Health and Safety will:

- Upon direction of Toronto Public Health, distribute bulk hand sanitizer units, containing a minimum of 60% alcohol to high use areas such as Learning Commons, Libraries, and Cafeterias for use by students and staff.
- Upon direction of Toronto Public Health, distribute masks to affected employees.
- Advise senior administration of any recommendations made by Toronto Public Health.

The Director, Facilities Management will:

- Initiate and maintain the escalated cleaning procedure for the duration of a declared pandemic.
- Be prepared to initiate any new cleaning procedures as recommended by Toronto Public Health.

9.3 Perceived ill Students/staff

It can be anticipated that students or staff exhibiting symptoms may be present at work/school. In the interest of public health, the following procedure will be followed:

9.3.1 Ill students

Students concerned about COVID-19 will be directed to reach out to Student Success, who will assess any risk to the college community.

9.3.2 Ill staff

It must be recognized that normal seasonal allergies, respiratory problems due to smoking, asthma or other health issues will also be present during a pandemic. However, supervisors who believe a member of their staff is ill with influenza will direct the employee to seek a medical opinion from their physician or an assessment centre, as appropriate. Health and Safety will be involved to assess risk to the college community.

9.3.3 Students/staff bringing children to campus

In the event of a pandemic, increased infection control methods are imperative. It may be anticipated that parents will want to bring their children to campus, should their daycare or public school system be disrupted by a pandemic. This practice will only serve to increase the transmission of the virus. Staff will not be permitted to bring their children to campus in the event of a pandemic.

As part of the communication plan, students and staff will be advised of the importance of keeping their children (affected by closures) from accompanying them to the campus and the prohibition of doing so. Stronger directives may be required and this issue will require reviewing, once the severity of the circulating strain has been established.

10.0 Communication

The Communications Department is responsible for the communication of relevant and timely information related to pandemic influenza.

The Communications Department will utilize the World Health Organization's phased-response system when determining the appropriate communication strategies. The department's activities during the pandemic period are in close conjunction with the Health & Safety Department.

In the event of a pandemic, it is essential that key messages and other forms of communication remain consistent and accurate, during a time period where it can be anticipated information will change frequently and may also be inaccurate. While the method of most communication related to a pandemic will be written; a college spokesperson will be identified in consultation with the VP, Communications.

The Communications department will assist, as required, the HR department with specific communications to employees.

10.1 Pre-pandemic

- Create and distribute pandemic/flu social marketing campaign (signage, pamphlets, distributing hand sanitizer).
- Prepare a pandemic page on the George Brown College website to post updates and provide basic pandemic information for faculty, staff and students and linking George Brown College audiences to public health and government pandemic websites.
- Develop a pandemic telephone hotline to post messages with ITT.
- Prepare a method of sending broadcast e-mails to faculty, staff and students for pandemic updates, example: Stu View.
- maintain on-going communication with ITT to ensure that George Brown College

- website can be maintained
- prepare an education campaign for faculty, staff and students (including students in residence) on:
 - what a pandemic is
 - where people can go (Internet, email, hotline, signs) for updates
 - hygiene concerns (proper hand washing technique, cough/sneeze etiquette, etc.)

Once a Pandemic is declared by WHO

- Determine whether a media release or update to the media on George Brown College's activities is necessary
- Appoint a college spokesperson
- Launch pandemic web page
- Launch telephone hotline with ITT
- Launch broadcast e-mails to faculty/staff/students keeping them apprised of the situation at George Brown College
- Update signage (posters, fliers, etc.) letting students/faculty/staff know of the ways they can find pandemic updates
- Launch pandemic education sessions for faculty, staff and students on:
 - what a pandemic is
 - where people can go (internet, email, hotline, signs) for updates
 - hygiene concerns (proper hand washing technique, cough/sneeze etiquette, etc.)
 - preparing your personal emergency kit
- Send key messages to department heads to maintain consistent messaging
- Advise students/staff to plan for alternate arrangements for childcare, in the event their normal arrangements are adversely affected by a pandemic

10.2 Pandemic with service/program disruption

- Update and maintain information on pandemic web page, including location of assessment centres and the telehealth and Toronto Public Health hotlines
- Send e-mail updates to faculty, staff and students
- Update message on college telephone hotline
- Update signage (posters, fliers, etc.) to reflect most recent information
- Send key messages to department heads to maintain consistent messaging
- In consultation with Senior Management Committee, determine communication of student/employee deaths

10.3 Post-pandemic

- Communicate suspension of pandemic alert system
- Revise plan as appropriate

11.0 Education Strategies

It is essential that information regarding pandemic influenza and proper hygiene practices is provided to both students and staff. Initially, information will be provided in an informal manner, related to seasonal influenza. The purpose of this initial intervention is to raise awareness and alter behaviours prior to a pandemic influenza outbreak. The goal of such initiatives is to reduce infection rate of individuals as much as possible. This may result in the impact of a pandemic on college operations also

being reduced.

11.1 Pre-pandemic

- Create and distribute pandemic/flu social marketing campaign (signage, pamphlets, distribute hand sanitizer).
- Prepare an education campaign for faculty, staff and students (including students in residence) on:
 - what a pandemic is
 - where people can go (Internet, email, hotline, signs) for updates
 - hygiene concerns (proper hand washing technique, cough/sneeze etiquette, use of washrooms, etc.)

Once a Pandemic is declared by WHO

- Launch pandemic education sessions for faculty, staff and students on:
 - what a pandemic is
 - where people can go (internet, email, hotline, signs) for updates
 - hygiene concerns (proper hand washing technique, cough/sneeze etiquette, etc.)
 - preparing a personal emergency kit

11.2 Pandemic with service/program disruption

- Discontinue education sessions to reduce person to person contact
- Provide information as per communication plan

12.0 Financial Issues

12.1 Inability to Deliver on Contracts – George Brown College Delivery

Any School/Department who enters into a contract to deliver services should ensure clauses are included that will protect the college from action, in the event the college closes or services cannot be delivered due to staff illness, unavailability of goods, etc.

12.2 Contracted Services

Any School/Department who receives contracted services should liaise with the provider to ensure services continue in the event of a pandemic for essential items such as payroll services, food services, security services, waste management services, etc.

12.3 Stockpiling Supplies

It can be anticipated that there will be shortages of supplies in the event of a pandemic as the supply chain will be interrupted due to absenteeism rates of all

organizations. Departments should contact the Purchasing Department to discuss any requirements to order and stockpile supplies, taking into account storage capabilities. It can be anticipated that the more severe the strain of influenza is, the greater the need to stockpile, and in quantities that will be adequate to provide for a reasonable duration. This is especially necessary for such products as cleaning/sanitizing supplies, hygiene paper products, dry grocery goods, etc.

13.0 Registrar Issues

13.1 Tuition Refunds

The decision to refund tuition will likely be reached through communication with normal external agencies. It is possible the decision to close a college may be based on individual college considerations ie: absenteeism of students and/or staff, public health advisories, etc.

13.2 Late Withdrawals

The decision on late withdrawals from academic programs will be determined by the Registrar's Office using existing policies and practices.

14.0 Student Residence

The George has its own emergency plan that includes guidance on how to manage pandemic emergencies. Student Success will liaise with our partner Campus Living Centres to ensure coordinated execution of plans in the event of a pandemic.