July 2015

Dear Faculty Member,

University Health Services often receives requests from faculty or students for “excuse notes” if a student has missed class or academic work.

Our policy is consistent with many of our peer institutions’ policies regarding this issue, and, in fact, is considered the industry standard set by the American College Health Association. We do not, nor do we encourage, the use of “notes” when students miss class because of illness. As part of our core mission, UHS provides valuable support to students as they navigate and manage their own healthcare. To that end, we encourage students to advocate for their health, and endorse students making independent judgements regarding avoidance of public places and rest if they are ill. We expect that the student will discuss a medical absence with a faculty and make arrangements for missed work.

Students do get a copy of their discharge instructions as a record of their visit if they choose to come to UHS for care. This is the only “proof” a student receives after a visit. There are some extenuating circumstances in which a student’s health may take priority over an exam or classroom deadlines. In such extreme cases, we will help the student to make connections with faculty through an academic adviser, dean, or through the professor directly if they are too ill to do so on their own. But these circumstances are rare, and are always generated by the UHS, and not by the student’s wish.

Students needing academic accommodation for prolonged health needs will work directly with our Comprehensive Care Manager, Diane Dawson, to ensure they receive any specialized support services available. Faculty will get a notice of such accommodations from the Office of Disability Services should this need occur.

Please do not hesitate the contact me with any questions regarding the above information at bkotarsk@andrew.cmu.edu.

Best wishes,

Beth Kotarski, MSN, CRNP-BC
Director, University Health Services