

Dear Parents:

With an increasing number of media outlets reporting on infectious diseases, in particular Ebola, I'd like to share Drake University's preparations, procedures, and risk assessment with you so that you are aware of how we keep campus safe. As Director of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), part of my charge is to ensure a safe campus environment for your child.

We are prepared

Drake University has actively participated in recent health forums with Polk County Public Health, the local hospitals, local emergency responders, Polk County Emergency Management, and Iowa Department of Public Health to evaluate current protocols and practices regarding management of suspect patients. Des Moines-area hospitals are equipped with isolation rooms, appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, and are conducting frequent training exercises to assure that all personnel are informed, trained, and experienced in management and isolation of any infectious disease. Drake has protective equipment and training in place to respond to infectious disease concerns.

We sanitize common areas daily

Drake Facilities conducts a comprehensive daily sanitation process using sanitizers that are designed to destroy bacteria and viruses.

We are updating procedures

Drake EHS has been reviewing and updating Drake University's policies and procedures according to the latest guidance from CDC and NIH.

We have in-house experts addressing this concern

Drake's EHS department held a coordinated meeting on the morning of October 21 with representatives from College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (infectious disease experts), Student Health, Residence Life, Public Safety, and International Studies to evaluate risks on campus and discuss procedures in the event that any student potentially demonstrates infectious disease of any sort. This committee is in the process of updating procedures and finalizing communication plans to assure that we are protecting students from any infectious disease outbreaks.

Our Ebola risk is low

EHS has worked with Student Records and the International Studies office and determined that the risk to Drake of Ebola is very low. We currently have no students, faculty, or staff studying or traveling for Drake activities in the countries in west Africa that are affected by the Ebola outbreak. If we do have students or faculty that travel to the region, there are extensive protocols in place at the national level to help protect the international travel community. We are also mindfully balancing communication and preparedness with risk and do not want to unnecessarily invoke additional duress or anxiety for our campus community or feelings of isolation or blame in any of our international student community members.

Overall, it is my assessment that while our potential for an Ebola outbreak is very low, we are in excellent position to respond quickly and effectively to assure our students are safe and receive the best care available. It is our intent in EHS to assure that we are actively working to prevent a wide variety infectious illnesses—including common concerns such as measles, influenza and meningitis as well as the less likely such as Ebola—from affecting our campus community. If you have any other questions or concerns on this matter, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

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