Good afternoon Chairwoman Stavisky and members of the New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education. My name is John Holloway, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, at Lehman College. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to share with you the process now in place at Lehman College to manage an outbreak of the H1N1 Influenza A virus. Specifically, I will discuss steps taken in student housing to address the threat this communicable disease presents to the entire campus.

As you are aware, last spring, New York and several states throughout the northeast were hit especially hard with several hundred reports of H1N1 infections. Widespread flu activity throughout the city demanded that CUNY campuses quickly examine strategic preparedness procedures to minimize risks, raise awareness, and plan what to do in the event an outbreak occurs. These efforts were ultimately grounded in the guidance and support we received from CUNY central as mentioned earlier by University Director of Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk Management, Howard Apsan.

At Lehman College, under the direction of the Vice President for Student Affairs, a Campus Pandemic Advisory Team was commissioned to advise the college in shaping Lehman’s
coordination, preparation and communication goals. The team consists of staff and faculty representatives from, human resources, buildings and grounds, environmental health and safety, student health center, president’s office, the master’s of public health program, and public safety. Through regularly scheduled weekly meetings, the team has developed a thorough campus-wide strategy which includes an education/awareness campaign; the development of an H1N1 Advisory web-link where students, staff and faculty are provided with information to locate a New York City clinic or medical center to receive the H1N1 vaccination; a series of e-mail alert messages to faculty, staff and students; the purchase and strategic placement of alcohol-based hand sanitizers in all campus buildings; increased frequency of restroom cleanings and other high touch areas throughout the campus. Overall, the team’s efforts are invaluable as members often seek to introduce other best practices occurring around the nation at other college and university campuses.

The bulk of our planned approach occurred in late spring. This planning was further fueled by a false alarm and the ensuing panic that was the result of a student resident announcing to the hall that he had recently been diagnosed with H1N1. This occurred in the middle of finals and at a time when many in the hall were complaining of flu-like symptoms. While the report in this case was false, a firestorm of emotions surfaced from residents and their families, which served to further mobilized our efforts. For us, an important take away from this event, was that our efforts also had to be directed at calming fears, not creating panic on campus, and providing factual information.
At the onset of our planning efforts, we were careful to focus attention to the dormitory. When the hall is fully occupied residents and their guests are in close contact with each other. On a daily basis, students touch shared surfaces in the bathrooms, kitchens, staircase banisters and computer keyboards. It remains clear, that a group of sick residents going the residence hall to classrooms and other campus facilities for a full day of classes could pose greater risks to the campus. In fact, if the H1N1 virus spreads throughout this dormitory, it could have a devastating impact on the entire Lehman College community, including commuter students, faculty and staff.

The housing staff, Student Health Center and representatives from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs continue to work closely with the residents to educate and clear up misconceptions about the H1N1 virus. We also encourage residents to adopt behaviors that help to mitigate the spread of the H1N1 virus. Among the things we did and continue to enforce with students living in housing, include:

- Promoting access to information and locations where students can be vaccinated against the H1N1 virus through hall meetings, posters, the college’s web site, and emails.

- Providing housing staff with in-service training by the Student Health Center and Public Safety, and preparing residence life staff to respond to residents’ inquiries. The in-service training is on-going.
• Conducting mandatory house meetings where factual information was distributed and discussed. These sessions were delivered by the Director of the Student Health Center. In addition, residents are instructed on effective cleaning and healthy habits to reduce the spread of the flu virus. Students are advised not to attend class if they experience flu symptoms, including a fever, and to self-isolate until these symptoms went away.

• Establishing and enforcing daily schedules for residents to clean bathrooms and kitchens. Disinfectants and cleaning supplies are provided at no costs. To supplement these efforts, we have secured the services of a custodial contractor to deep clean all commons areas in the house twice a week.

• Placing hand sanitizers in all bathrooms.

• Engaging the residence hall council to develop effective programming to address keeping the facility clean and germ free.

• Posting educational and informational flyers throughout the residence.

In closing, our team continues to participate in university-wide briefings. We also continue to meet and coordinate efforts with CUNY central as we manage the risks.