**Tuesday, August 18, 2020**

**News for Faculty: Penn State’s Preparations for Fall 2020**

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty with Penn State’s pandemic-related news and updates as the University prepares for the Fall 2020 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional “special editions” delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](https://vpfa.psu.edu/academicaffairs/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/).

**QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY**

**Q:** ***How do I know if my building is safe?***

**A:** Penn State’s Office of Physical Plant (OPP) has been gearing up for the return to campus by carefully evaluating all building mechanical and life safety systems to ensure that they are 100 percent functional and ready for occupancy. As part of its facilities evaluation and practices, OPP follows guidance from the PA Department of Health and the CDC and follows the recommendations of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

OPP has modified, where appropriate, how buildings operate to provide more ventilation, air flow and outdoor air being brought into buildings. Other steps include reviewing building records to determine current status and address any deficiencies in air distribution/air flow; maintaining indoor comfort with regard to temperature and humidity; transitioning to air filters that screen for fine particulate matter where the systems can handle it; and sponsoring UV disinfectant research for mechanical systems and exploring bipolar ionization systems that can deactivate harmful substances.

More information is available [here](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/story/what-steps-is-the-office-of-physical-plant-taking-to-reduce-the-potential-for-spread-of-covid-19-in-classrooms-offices-restrooms-and-other-indoor-areas).

**Q:** ***Are my responses in the Symptom Checker anonymous?***

**A:** Penn State's Symptom Checker is used to support personal wellness, by helping you make informed decisions about your health and the safety of others, in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. No identifying information/data is stored within the Symptom Checker. Penn State will only use and share your anonymized survey responses for trend analysis to inform COVID-19 response and mitigation efforts, to support the health and safety of our Penn State community. More information is available [here](https://news.psu.edu/story/628358/2020/08/13/campus-life/university-community-strongly-encouraged-use-covid-19-symptom).

**Q: *Are neck gaiters an acceptable type of face covering?***

**A:** Multi-layer cloth masks or procedure masks are the preferred type of face covering. There is evidence that single-layer face coverings, including many types of neck gaiters, are not as effective in stopping respiratory droplets as multi-layer face coverings. At this time, it is recommended that all faculty, staff, and students wear a multi-layer mask or a procedure mask. All face coverings must cover the nose and chin, and masks with exhaust valves are not permitted.

**LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY**

* Penn State students living on campus who were selected for pre-arrival COVID-19 testing [will not be permitted to check in to their residence hall](https://news.psu.edu/story/628456/2020/08/14/campus-life/campus-students-selected-virus-testing-must-have-results-move) until they have received a negative test result from Vault Health. Students receiving positive test results will not be permitted to move in until they have completed their isolation period. Students who were selected for testing who did not complete a test will be advised via LionPATH that they will not be able to attend a class in person or participate in any on-campus activities until they complete the test.
* Instructors can locate information about which software students can access from international locations on the [Software at Penn State website](https://www.software.psu.edu/files/2020/08/International-Software-Restrictions.pdf).

**KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

* Are you curious about what in-person instruction will look like this fall? [Watch this short video](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/teaching-and-testing/health-and-safety/) to see a realistic preview of how the guidance on the use of masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) in the classroom and on campus will be implemented. The video site also includes some helpful tips for teaching in a physically-distanced classroom and additional information on university policy and teaching strategies.
* An [Instructor Guide to Fall 2020](https://pennstateoffice365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/KeepTeachingSupportDocuments/EZ7-QymnhHVOn86qV-smVsEB1FQfSAAyg0MUgNhMfImKug?e=lOZdab&CID=540CA39A-E9F4-459B-9B54-1B30B2322A2D&wdLOR=c5217E801-9EC5-4807-8CD5-F667A83F1C6B) has been created to compile and organize COVID-related information for faculty. The guide [distills available information](https://news.psu.edu/story/628583/2020/08/17/academics/new-instructor-guide-combines-safety-best-practices-information) ranging from protocols and policies governing health and safety, to technology and training resources, to best practices for instruction into a “one-stop shop” for instructors.
* A “[Countdown to Classes](https://news.psu.edu/story/628080/2020/08/12/academics/countdown-classes-toolkit-available-help-instructors-prepare-fall)” toolkit, created by a group of Penn State teaching and learning experts, includes a [flexible instruction guide](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/), a two-hour webinar, and 25 virtual drop-in office hours. A full schedule is available [here](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/countdown-to-classes/).
* [A new FAQ](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/story/what-is-the-difference-between-isolation-and-quarantine-and-why-are-there-different-time-requirements), published on Penn State’s “virusinfo” website, describes the [difference between isolation and quarantine](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/story/what-is-the-difference-between-isolation-and-quarantine-and-why-are-there-different-time-requirements) and the different time requirements associated with each.
* Penn State has launched an integrated effort to remind faculty, staff, and students at all campuses and in adjacent communities of the importance of doing their part to limit the spread of COVID-19. “[Mask Up or Pack Up](https://news.psu.edu/story/628171/2020/08/12/campus-life/penn-state-launches-new-public-health-campaign)” is a research-based campaign that is also launched in State College to create a seamless message for students and other members of the community.
* In response to concerns about language in the Penn State COVID-19 Compact, [language in the compact has been revised](https://news.psu.edu/story/628278/2020/08/13/campus-life/penn-state-provides-updated-compact-option-students). Students returning to any Penn State campus must acknowledge the Compact as a condition of a return to learning on campus.
* Students and employees who were [selected for pre-arrival COVID-19 testing](https://news.psu.edu/story/628360/2020/08/13/administration/students-employees-selected-pre-arrival-testing-reminded) should initiate and complete their at-home saliva test immediately if they have not already done so.
* The Penn State College of Nursing, in collaboration with Penn State Extension, is delivering an online course to educate participants on the basics of contact tracing. This non-credit, three-hour course is open to the public and prepares participants to support contact tracing in their local communities and organizations. There is a fee of $25 for participants who are not affiliated with the University. [Register here](https://extension.psu.edu/covid-19-contact-tracing).
* [Faculty can still submit questions](https://news.psu.edu/story/628322/2020/08/13/academics/penn-state-faculty-can-still-submit-questions-about-return) related to Penn State’s plans for a return to classrooms in the fall. Questions may be submitted [here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdLJXKUWNxbcqBGf_NJ7x0734cy_GId-aIoiCNYpWPjXAEGsw/viewform).
* Copious development and training opportunities are available to faculty in preparation for the Fall 2020 semester. [Upcoming webinars for instructors](http://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars) at all Penn State campuses include:
* Wednesday, August 19: [Canvas, Kaltura and Zoom: Enabling Continuity of Instruction](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars/canvas-kaltura-and-zoom-enabling-continuity-of-instruction-2/)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:**

* The University’s comprehensive resources on its [“Back to State” page](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/back-to-state) and [updated FAQs](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/topic/back-to-state) regarding **plans to resume on-campus work and learning this fall**
* Penn State’s [“Keep Teaching”](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/) and [“Keep Learning”](https://keeplearning.psu.edu/) websites, including many [Fall 2020 instruction-related FAQs](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/fall-2020/frequently-asked-questions/) and [new webinars](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars/)
* The online archive of [video messages](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/video-messages-fall-2020-preparations/) from Penn State leaders and experts, previous [news digests](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/), and pandemic-related University [news stories](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/penn-state-pandemic-response-news-and-resources/)
* The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](https://hr.psu.edu/covid-19-coronavirus) and [“Return to Work on Campus”](https://sites.psu.edu/returntowork/) resource site
* The [“University Measures” webpage](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/university-measures/), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
* The University’s [health information page focused on personal safety practices](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/stay-well) for individuals at all campuses
* A robust, updated[list of contacts and resources](https://sites.psu.edu/virusinfo/contacts-and-resources-for-penn-staters/)for the University community
* The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](https://covid-19.ssri.psu.edu/) and other resources