

Friday, October 9, 2020

News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty and instructors with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates during 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](#). For current Fall 2020 faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the ["Back to State Info for Faculty"](#) webpage.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY

Q: *What is the status of the Visiting Scholar program?*

A: Below is an outline of how existing applications, new applications, extension requests, and paid J-1 scholars will be handled.

Existing Visiting Scholars

Those Visiting Scholars whose applications have been approved and have a visa stamp may come to Penn State as planned. Those who have not yet obtained a visa stamp are asked to reschedule their arrival until July 1, 2021. This guidance will be revisited monthly and revised as State Department and other public health guidance evolves.

New Applications

Based on the U.S. Department of State Global Health Advisory and suspension or limitation of visa services in many countries, Penn State will begin processing new domestic and international Visiting Scholar applications on March 1, 2021 for arrival on or after July 1, 2021. Applications currently in the system will not be approved until March and prospective Visiting Scholars should be contacted and their arrival rescheduled until on or after July 1, 2021. Requests for exceptions may be made to vpfa@psu.edu by the college or campus executive. If circumstances change due to COVID, the March 1 date may be revisited.

Extensions for Current Visiting Scholars

Visiting Scholar extension requests will continue to be reviewed. If a Visiting Scholar is scheduled to depart but wants to stay at Penn State due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an extension request must be submitted in DocFinity. Please work with the staff in the academic unit who submit Visiting Scholar requests. Questions from units regarding extensions and required documentation should be directed to the dean or chancellor designee in each unit. If assistance is needed from the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, contact Mindy Kowalski at msk22@psu.edu.

Paid J-1 Scholars

DISSA will work with new post-doc foreign nationals to determine a realistic start date, taking into consideration: U.S. embassy services limitations, current travel restrictions, and the needs of the department. Unit executives should send exception requests to vpfa@psu.edu and include a description of why the appointment is essential. This

guidance will be revisited monthly and revised as State Department and other public health guidance evolves.

Q: *What are the dates for spring 2021 course registration?*

A: Students will be able to access the spring 2021 schedule of classes with information about the instructional mode for each course on LionPATH beginning Oct. 15. Once the schedule of courses is published, students should meet with their advisers to plan their courses and make sure they are on track for important milestones such as entry to major and graduation. Registration will begin on Nov. 1 for graduate students and Nov. 2 for undergraduate students. Students are encouraged to register for classes by Nov. 20 before they leave for Thanksgiving break. Students also are encouraged to consult the “Registration Timetable” on the [Office of the University Registrar website](#) to determine when they are eligible to register, based on the number of credits they have earned.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State [released its preliminary coronavirus testing results](#) for the period of October 2 to 8 on its [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) today. Among students tested at the University Park campus whose test results have been processed, Penn State received 278 positive results from its on-demand testing and 9 positive results from its random testing program.
- The recorded October 8 Q&A session with President Eric Barron is [now available to view online](#). The Q&A was the first live webinar in a [new series of discussions](#) with faculty members about Penn State’s ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic and other related critical topics.
- Penn State’s [walk-up COVID-19 testing location](#) at University Park is moving from the HUB Parking Deck to the main concourse of Pegula Ice Arena beginning Friday, October 9. Penn State is offering asymptomatic on-demand testing for University Park employees who are listed in the University’s Return to Work database. The Pegula site is open for employees only from 9 to 10 a.m. Monday through Friday, or employees may walk up at any time during the center’s normal operating hours of 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.
- During the month of October, Penn State Commonwealth Campuses will be offering [opt-in, asymptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) for faculty and staff who are working on campus and wish to be tested.
- To support the mental health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff, Penn State will build [“wellness” days](#) into the spring 2021 academic calendar in place of the traditional weeklong spring break.

- Penn State policy officers will begin to enforce the [State College Borough COVID-19 safety ordinance](#) on the University Park campus.
- The October 4 virtual Town Hall event for students and families is now archived and available for viewing at <https://LiveEvents.psu.edu>.
- Since the beginning of the fall semester, Housing and Food Services and Residence Life collaboratively developed and launched additional services especially for students in quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19. Penn State employees from outside those areas also are [stepping up and volunteering their time](#) to support ill students.
- Watch a [short video](#) on a trans-disciplinary effort led by Penn State research scientists to develop an innovative new method for rapidly diagnosing viral infections, including COVID-19.
- A researcher in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences is part of a team of scientists working to [develop a unique COVID-19 vaccine](#) that uses a bovine adenovirus as a safe and effective delivery vehicle.
- University Libraries will present a [series of free virtual seminars](#) to assist researchers with shifting their research from onsite to offsite.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Beginning Thursday, October 8 at 4 p.m., [President Barron will host a live webinar](#) as part of a new series to answer questions from faculty members about Penn State's ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic and other related topics.
- Three new [COVID-19 surveillance testing sites](#) will be open for Penn State employees and students on the University Park campus starting October 7. These indoor locations replace previous University Park campus testing locations and expand services to include employee-only hours.
- Plans for Penn State's Spring 2021 semester were [announced October 4](#) and include a later start in January, continuation of the current flexible instructional modes, elimination of spring break, and completion of instruction by April 30 for its 20 undergraduate campuses.
- The window of time for students to [schedule spring 2021 courses](#) has been adjusted to align with the recently announced revised spring semester schedule, which includes a one-week later start in January.

- University leaders [answered questions from students and parents](#) about Penn State's response to the coronavirus during an online Town Hall event on October 4.
- University leadership has announced the [cancellation of study abroad programming](#) through the spring 2021 term.
- Gathering feedback from students at an early point in the semester helps gauge students' learning and provides instructors with valuable data for making course adjustments. Students appreciate being asked for feedback, especially when instructors respond with changes to improve learning. Surveying students is one method for gathering feedback. PSU learning surveys specific to the four COVID instructional modes have been created for you to download into your Canvas course to collect student feedback on the learning modes. Click [here](#) for instructions on how to download them into your course. For information about other options for collecting midsemester feedback, see the Schreyer Institute's Midsemester Feedback [page](#).
- Share a story about your successes in the Fall 2020 semester, in-person, mixed, or remote! We're looking for stories from instructors, students, and staff. Your experiences can help motivate and inspire others and generate new ideas that benefit the Penn State community. You may also recognize someone who you think is doing great work. You can find the form [here](#), which we encourage you to distribute within your department.
- Penn State Human Resources, in partnership with Health Advocate, has announced a [three-pronged approach for the 2020 flu vaccine clinics](#) throughout the commonwealth. Employees can choose one of three options to get a flu shot.
- [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State's return to classrooms this fall. Questions may be submitted [here](#).
- The "Keep Engaging" Fall Webinar Series will be delivered via Zoom, from noon to 1 p.m. every Monday through November 16. Upcoming webinars include:
 - Monday, October 12, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Supporting Students in Building Their Spring 2021 Schedules](#)
- Professional development and training opportunities are available to faculty. [Upcoming webinars for instructors](#) at all Penn State campuses include:
 - Tuesday, October 13, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., [Creating, Finding, and Assessing Instructional Video to Engage Students](#)
 - Wednesday, October 14, 2:00-4:00 p.m., [Creating, Finding, and Assessing Instructional Video to Engage Students](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

- The University's comprehensive resources on its ["Back to State" page](#) and [updated FAQs](#) regarding on-campus work and learning this fall
- Penn State's ["Keep Teaching"](#) and ["Keep Learning"](#) websites, including many [Fall 2020 instruction-related FAQs](#) and [new webinars](#)
- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- The online archive of [video messages](#) from Penn State leaders and experts
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and ["Return to Work on Campus"](#) resource site
- The ["University Measures" webpage](#), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
- The University's [health information page focused on personal safety practices](#) for individuals at all campuses
- A robust, updated [list of contacts and resources](#) for the University community
- The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](#) and other resources