

**Friday, October 23, 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: *Is there a number I can call to ask COVID-related questions?***

**A:** Beginning Tuesday, Oct. 20, faculty, staff members, students and families across all Penn State campuses can call the Penn State COVID-19 Response Center at 814-865-2121. The center's hours of operation (all Eastern Time) are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. For more information, please see the [full story](#).

**Q: *Do I have to excuse students from attending class on Election Day?***

**A:** The University Faculty Senate passed an amendment at its September 15 meeting to [Policy 42-27 on Class Attendance](#) to include election day absences as a university excused absence and to encourage faculty to make reasonable accommodations when possible for students who miss class because they are participating in an election. The language reads as follows: "Instructors...should provide, within reason, the opportunity to make up work for students who miss classes on an election day due to participation in local, state, and federal governmental elections. Students should make every effort to inform the instructor prior to the election day of their anticipated absence in advance and make appropriate arrangements to make up work."

The website [www.psuvotes.psu.edu](http://www.psuvotes.psu.edu) contains comprehensive voting information for students, including faculty resources for courses.

### **LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY**

- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) is updated every Tuesday and Friday with the results of on-demand and random testing of both students and employees.
- The recorded Oct. 22 webinar with Penn State President Eric Barron is now available to view online at <https://liveevents.psu.edu/oct-22-2020-webinar/>. The ongoing series allows Barron to directly address questions from faculty and staff about the University's response to the pandemic, as well as other related, critical

topics. For more information about the webinar and the webinar series, please see today's [news story](#).

- Penn State has announced procedures and [assistance available to students for the fall departure from campuses](#), as well as COVID-19 testing and quarantine and isolation procedures after in-person instruction ends on November 20.
- Currently, there are three different types of tests to determine whether someone has COVID-19 or has previously been infected. A [news story](#) examines each type of test and the differences between each of them.
- At the [latest meeting of the Faculty Senate on October 20](#), senators received an update on the University's virus mitigation efforts, Penn State's fall departure plans, and changes to SRTEs for Fall 2020. The Senate also engaged in a discussion about a report on the 2020 Penn State Community Survey.

## WEBINARS

- 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 26, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Cultivating the "Mindful Nittany Pause" in Our Everyday as Penn Staters](#)
- [Upcoming webinars for instructors](#) at all Penn State campuses include:
  - Wednesday, October 28, 4:30-5:45 p.m., [Addressing Ethnocentrism and Racism in the Classroom](#)
  - Thursday, October 29, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [How to Help Distressed Students](#)
- The [Transition to Remote Symposium](#) will help instructors prepare for the planned pivot to remote instruction on November 20. More than 25 experts, including faculty champions from six campuses as well as experts from TLT, the Schreyer Institute, World Campus, Penn State Harrisburg Center for Teaching Excellence, and more, will serve as co-facilitators/panelists during the event.
  - Friday, November 6, 10:00 a.m.-2:45 p.m.

## KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- In appreciation of the efforts of faculty and instructors to support students' learning, all members of Penn State's instructional community, at any location, are invited to attend the virtual [ITLC Lilly Conference - Enhancing Online, Onsite, and Hybrid Teaching & Learning](#), Nov. 30 to Dec. 4, 2020. We welcome all full-time faculty, part-time instructors, graduate students, teaching assistants, learning designers, and post-docs, but space is limited! To reserve your spot go to: [tinyurl.com/LillySignUp](https://tinyurl.com/LillySignUp).

- In order to encourage communication to students in preparation for the November 20th transition to remote teaching and learning, a series of templates has been created for instructors who are currently teaching In-Person or Mixed courses. This will assist in communicating key information to students to help them to prepare to be successful in their studies as they make this transition. We recommend all instructors [review these templates](#) and begin communicating this information as soon as possible.
- Penn State IT is working to assist instructors and students with preparations for the remote teaching period that will take place following the Thanksgiving break. Information on technology resources and the Technology Loaner Programs is available on Penn State's [Keep Teaching](#) and [Keep Learning](#) websites. For students, there is a limited supply of loaner laptops and mobile hotspots. For instructors who need assistance with digital annotation, there is a limited supply of loaner iPads. Instructors and students can [access the Mobile Technology Request Form](#) with their Access ID and password.
- 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](#).

## 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