

**Tuesday, October 6, 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.

### **FEATURED NEWS – President Barron to host weekly virtual sessions for faculty and instructors**

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.

### **FEATURED VIDEO – Should I get a flu shot this year?**

In this [video](#), Dr. Nita Bharti explains why getting a flu shot is a good idea, and how more people with immunity to the flu means fewer patients taking up medical resources during a pandemic.

### **QUESTION FROM FACULTY**

**This is an updated response to a question previously answered in this Digest. The updated portion is highlighted in yellow.**

#### ***Q: Can faculty require students to turn on their webcam during remote learning?***

**A:** No. Faculty should adopt a camera-optional practice for teaching through Zoom. A camera-optional approach respects student issues such as access and equity (some may not have cameras on their devices), safety and security (some may be deployed military or in need of safety or privacy), and religious strictures. Faculty members who previously did not take attendance in their in-person classrooms should continue to respect that their students will attend remotely. Faculty who took attendance previously should explore manual and automatic options for taking attendance through Zoom. For help with these options, visit [keepsteaching.psu.edu/training](https://keepsteaching.psu.edu/training). If a faculty member chooses to record a Zoom session, recorded student participation during the session should not be required. Other forms of participation, e.g., private chat, can be required and assessed. Students should be provided the choice to opt-out from identification in the recording by muting their audio, disabling video, and not typing public chats.

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

- The [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) is updated every Tuesday and Friday with on-demand and random testing results for employees and students.

- 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. In addition, employee walk-up testing at University Park will again be available beginning tomorrow (Wednesday, October 7) in the HUB Parking Deck. Employee-only hours are 9-10 a.m. and hours for employees and students are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Indoor testing options at University Park will be announced at the end of the week.
- 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.

## KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- The University is launching a [new webinar series](#) intended for staff and instructors who support the ongoing empowerment, engagement, and well-being of Penn State students. The "Keep Engaging" Fall Webinar Series will be delivered via Zoom, from noon to 1 p.m. every Monday through November 16. The schedule is available at [keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars).
- Any student who feels sick and has symptoms of COVID-19, or is concerned about COVID-19 exposure, is [strongly encouraged to stay home](#) and contact University Health Services, their campus health center, or a primary care provider immediately to discuss testing options. Each Penn State campus has a plan for testing symptomatic students, either on campus or via a local provider.
- In a special meeting held September 29, the [Penn State Faculty Senate](#) hosted a robust discussion on faculty questions and concerns related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and engaged in collaborative conversation with members of University leadership.
- Penn State will honor fall 2020 graduates with a [virtual ceremony](#) on Saturday, December 19.

- While the overwhelming majority of students have and continue to comply with Penn State's health and safety policies related to COVID-19, Penn State's Office of Student Conduct has responded to a number of reported violations. Since Aug. 17, the University has issued [1,277 sanctions for violation of various COVID-19-related restrictions and policies](#), including refusal to wear a mask or face covering in public, non-adherence to Penn State's quarantine/isolation guidelines, and failure to observe guidance that strictly moderates gatherings both on and off campus.
- Information for faculty about virtual study groups is available [here](#). Students who regularly participate in study groups may earn higher grades than they would studying alone, and tend to be more actively involved in their courses.
- 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](#).
- Professional development and training opportunities are available to faculty. [Upcoming webinars for instructors](#) at all Penn State campuses include:
  - Thursday, October 8, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Gathering and Responding to Student Feedback](#)

## 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