

Friday, November 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.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY

CORRECTION: The information below provides corrected information about classroom availability during Finals Week.

Q: Will instructors at University Park and the campuses be able to use their classrooms after the University moves to remote instruction after November 20?

A: At University Park, general purpose classrooms will be closed during the Thanksgiving Break, from November 21 to November 29. General Purpose Classrooms in Thomas, Willard, Boucke, Osmond, and Hammond Buildings will be reopen for student study use on November 30 through the end of Finals Week on December 18. Instructors needing to use classrooms in other buildings, or to reserve a GPC in the five open buildings, should work with their academic scheduler. At the Commonwealth Campuses, general purpose classrooms will remain open to instructors for use after November 20, but instructors should check with local campus officials regarding availability of specific facilities. If an instructor is alone in the classroom, then they do not need to wear a mask. Masks must be worn in the presence of others, and shared equipment such as microphones, keyboards, and other items should be wiped down in accordance with Environmental Health and Safety "[Guidelines for Cleaning Computer Products](#)".

Q: Should I travel internationally during the upcoming remote period and/or the semester break?

A: The [U.S. Department of State](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) have issued international COVID-19 travel advisories and recommend reconsidering or avoiding travel to many destinations. Penn State is extending the same guidance to all students, faculty and staff. If an employee decides to travel internationally for personal reasons during the remote period after November 20 and/or during the holiday break, Penn State's expectation is that they will return to the U.S. at the beginning of the spring semester. **While minor travel delays can likely be accommodated, employees who are unable to return to the U.S. by the beginning of the spring semester will not be approved to work remotely from another country and will have to go on unpaid**

leave until they return to the U.S. Requests to work remotely from another country – even for a short period of time – can create significant tax, regulatory, and other issues for the University and involve complex legal analysis and expenditure of significant amounts of time and resources. All University-affiliated travel continues to be suspended until further notice. If travel is essential (i.e., mission critical), the request must be approved by the unit executive and then screened by the Provost’s office (or Lora Weiss for ARL/Kevin Black for the College of Medicine). More information is available [here](#).

Q: *Is there walk-up testing at Pegula this weekend and beyond?*

A: Walk-up testing at Pegula Ice Arena will not be offered this Saturday, November 7, due to the home football game against Maryland. In addition, the hours for walk-up testing will change to noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday, November 8. These adjustments to testing hours are being made as a result of low demand during the season’s first home football weekend. With the start of [voluntary student departure testing](#) on November 12, walk-up virus testing at Pegula for students and employees will close at the end of the day on November 11.

Beginning immediately and continuing through the month of November, all faculty and staff employees who are in the ‘Return to Work’ database may take advantage of a new process for voluntary asymptomatic COVID-19 testing. Employees wishing to initiate this process should visit <https://vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/psuemployee>. Test kits will be mailed to home addresses and the test will be completed under virtual observation with Vault Health to complete the process. Read the full FAQ [here](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State's COVID-19 dashboard has been updated today to reflect the latest available information. Additional details are available [here](#).
- Uncertainties across the world related to the ongoing pandemic – which have made travel difficult in many regions – have led Penn State leaders to [suspend all University-affiliated international travel until further notice](#), and to also strongly discourage personal travel abroad by Penn Staters.
- While Penn State gears up for the end of in-person instruction on November 20, instructors have been planning since the beginning of the fall semester for this ‘pivotal’ moment. [This article](#) provides information about how to assist students with the transition, testing for employees, and more.
- In preparation for departure from campuses after in-person instruction ends on November 20, [Penn State has announced an aggressive fall departure plan](#)

offering all students COVID-19 testing, at no cost to students. More details about the plan can be found [here](#).

- Penn State IT is asking the University community for [help growing its pool of available laptops](#) to loan out to students in need. Only Penn State-owned laptops are eligible for donation.
- A new Thursday night tradition is starting to take root to [help Penn State students through their quarantine and isolation time](#) at the University Park campus thanks to Lee Kump, the John Leone Dean in the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, and his wife Michelle. The two pitched the idea of a bingo night via Zoom to support students in quarantine and isolation, and when given the green light, went to work organizing the event, which includes guest callers and prizes.
- After weeks of rehearsals in parking garages, open-sided tents, lecture rooms, Schwab Auditorium and the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, Penn State choirs will share the results of their work in 30-minute, socially distanced and masked performances from the School of Music Recital Hall and Pasquerilla Spiritual Center. All concerts can be viewed at the School of Music Livestream link: <https://musicmedia.psu.edu>. Five choirs featuring more than 200 students from all colleges at University Park will be featured as follows:

Sunday, November 8:

- 2:00-2:30 p.m., Concert Choir (mixed voices), directed by Dr. Christopher Kiver
- 3:30-4:00 p.m., Glee Club (lower voices), directed by Dr. Christopher Kiver
- 7:30-8:00 p.m., Essence of Joy (mixed voices), directed by Dr. Anthony Leach

Sunday, November 15

- 2:00-2:30 p.m., Oriana Singers (upper voices), directed by Dr. Kathryn Hylton
- 2:40-3:10 p.m., University Choir (mixed voices), directed by Dr. Bryan Nichols

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, November 9, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Inspiring Social Responsibility through Continued Learning and Dialogue](#)
- President Eric Barron’s webinar, originally scheduled for October 29, has now been rescheduled for 3 p.m. on Tuesday, November 9, via Zoom. Due to a power

outage at Barron's location on October 29, the webinar was postponed. The webinar will be a Q&A format, and will be accessible via [Zoom](#).

- Upcoming webinars for instructors at all Penn State campuses include:
 - Thursday, November 12, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., [Academic Integrity Panel Discussion](#)
 - Friday, November 13, 10:00-11:00 a.m., [Exam Strategies for Remote Delivery](#)

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- After a special meeting on October 29, the Faculty Senate voted to endorse a resolution drafted by student senators requesting the [reinstatement of an optional alternative grading system](#) for undergraduate students for the fall semester. The Senate then also voted to reinstate [Senate Policy 49-70](#), which established the alternative grading system implemented during the spring 2020 semester.
- [Penn State's overall enrollment for fall 2020 saw only a modest decrease](#) in the past year, positioning the University well ahead of nationwide averages during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Penn State is urging all students, faculty and staff](#) to download and use the Pennsylvania Department of Health's [COVID Alert PA app](#) to assist with early detection of possible COVID-19 exposure. The app uses private and anonymous [Exposure Notification System](#) technology developed by Apple and Google to detect if a user has been in close contact with another app user who later tested positive for COVID-19.
- 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.
- 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