

Friday, October 30, 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 resources and support can I provide to my students related to the election?

A: Many faculty members and instructors are wondering how to support students who may be experiencing stress related to the upcoming election and how to manage challenging conversations in instructional spaces such as classrooms and laboratories. Providing students with the opportunity to make up work missed on election day, and providing students with information about the voting process, can help to alleviate students' concerns. The University Faculty Senate recently amended its policies about class attendance to include a provision for students to make up coursework missed during election day. The specific language can be found [here](#). Additionally, more information about voting and voter intimidation is available in an October 29 email, available [here](#), from Executive Vice President and Provost Nick Jones and at Penn State's ['psuvotes'](#) website.

The Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence developed a resource guide, titled [Teaching through the Election](#), that provides useful information about how faculty and instructors can manage student reactions to election results. In addition, two upcoming programs provide additional resources for faculty, instructors and teaching assistants: [Teaching in the Post-Election Classroom](#) on Monday, November 2, from 3-4 p.m., and the final installment of the ["Toward Racial Equity" roundtable series](#), which will focus on the results and potential impacts of the election, on Wednesday, November 4, from 6-8 p.m.

Q: Is Penn State testing students before they leave in November?

A: To help prevent virus transmission outside of Penn State's campus communities as students return home, the University is offering free voluntary COVID-19 testing for students prior to leaving campus. Penn State is partnering with Vault Health for the departure testing, which will be conducted either in person at predetermined testing sites on certain campuses or via self-administered kits. More information is available in this [Penn State News story](#).

Q: Will graduate courses continue to be taught in person after November 20?

A: All courses, including graduate courses, will move to an online instructional format after November 20, 2020. Graduate (and undergraduate) students currently undertaking research in person are permitted to continue doing research in labs after the Thanksgiving holiday in accordance with the [guidance](#) from the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research. Any graduate (and undergraduate) students continuing their research on campus must have received prior approval to do so from the relevant academic dean, must adhere to the SOPs of the lab, and must be part of the person-count for square footage, scheduling, and any other relevant considerations.

Law and Medicine

Penn State Law classes at University Park will continue in their hybrid format through Tuesday, November 24, 2020, the last day of Penn State Law classes. Dickinson Law classes will continue in their hybrid format through November 24, 2020, and classes will be held in a fully remote format from Monday, November 30 through Friday, December 4, 2020. At the College of Medicine, all pre-clinical courses for MD and PA students, and all graduate studies courses, will move to an online instructional format after Friday, November 20, 2020. Medical and physician assistant students in clinical rotations and clerkships will continue their patient care activities in hospital and office settings following the Thanksgiving holiday. They must adhere to all hospital policies for the use of PPE, hand hygiene and physical distancing in patient care settings.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- [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.
- 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.
- As the [Nittany Lion football team prepares to take on Ohio State](#) for its first home game of the 2020 season, Coach James Franklin shared his appreciation for the support from Nittany Nation and encouraged safe celebrations in a [video message](#).
- [As students complete quarantine and isolation](#) as part of the University's layered approach to mitigate the spread of coronavirus on its campuses, they are being surveyed to collect feedback about their experiences and to inform ongoing improvements in services and processes.

- To support the mental health and well-being of students, faculty and staff during the spring 2021 semester, [Penn State will hold three wellness days on which no classes will be held](#). The wellness days will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 9, Thursday, March 11 and Wednesday, April 7.
- Penn State is providing a [new opportunity for students at University Park to support the Nittany Lion football team](#) for the upcoming game against Ohio State. University Park students who live on campus will be invited to watch the first home football game outdoors in a socially distant manner, in accordance with public health guidelines and the governor's limitations. Seats will be made available to first-year students and will extend to other on-campus residents if space allows.
- A researcher in Penn State's School of Public Policy is [using data and analysis from the current pandemic](#) in a new course to demonstrate the significance policy plays in our emergency response, and to stress the systemic inequities and partisan politics that challenge our confrontation of a national health emergency.
- The Pennsylvania School Study Council and The American Center for the Study of Distance Education in the College of Education, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is holding a [Distance Learning Series on "Proactive Planning Past the Pandemic."](#)

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 2, 12:00-1:00 p.m., [Tutoring in the Time of COVID](#)
- [Teaching in the Post-Election Classroom](#), sponsored by the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence
 - Monday, November 2, 3:00-4:00 p.m.
- [Toward Racial Equity at Penn State](#) roundtable series: The Day After: Assessing the Post-Election State of the Nation
 - Wednesday, November 4, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- 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 the wake of large gatherings of students at some off-campus apartment complexes in State College during the Penn State-Indiana University football game on Saturday, [Penn State and the Borough of State College announced today \(Oct. 26\) joint planning, enforcement and outreach measures](#) designed to help prevent similar gatherings during Saturday evening's home game against Ohio State and future games.
- Effective at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 1, daylight savings time ends in most of the United States. Faculty are encouraged to address this with students as this may impact deadlines and course times. Students located in other countries should consider their local schedule in conjunction with their Penn State classes. For more information, visit the [Penn State Global programs website](#).
- 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.
- 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