

Friday, January 15, 2021

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 Spring 2021 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](#). For current faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the ["Back to State Info for Faculty"](#) webpage.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: *Where can employees go for COVID-19 testing?*

A: Through Feb. 5, 2021, walk-up testing is available for University Park employees listed in the "Return to Work" database from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the Hintz Family Alumni Center. Also, through Jan. 30, [Centre County is offering free, walk-up COVID-19 testing for community members](#) from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Testing will be conducted at the Nittany Mall (enter via the outside Bon-Ton storefront) through Saturday, Jan. 16; from Jan. 19-Jan. 30, testing will be conducted at 1155 Benner Pike, suite 120 (the former Comcast location).

For faculty and staff at University Park and other Penn State locations who work on site, opt-in asymptomatic testing via a Vault Health mail-in kit is available. Testing will continue to be available only to employees who are listed in the University's Return to Work database. Employees can [initiate this testing process online through Vault Health](#). 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

- [All students are required to participate in COVID-19 testing](#) and have a negative result on file prior to returning to their campus community. This includes graduate students and students who have remained on campus or lived near campus during the winter break.
- For instructors looking to build community and increase engagement in their classes, here are a few easy-to-implement ideas: https://pennstateoffice365-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/jlw63_psu_edu/EZZmptYMX5FBhXgk07HEP7MBBJV51I_p6IDET54nEkZv_w?e=kh0hFS.

- In Pennsylvania, the state Department of Health and county health departments are responsible for [COVID-19 vaccine distribution](#), which is being done in a phased approach with health care workers and those in long-term care facilities in the initial phase (Phase 1A). At this time, Penn State has not been named a distribution site for the vaccine and faculty, staff, and students should visit [Pennsylvania's vaccine website](#) for information on when they may be eligible to receive a vaccine and where those vaccines may be available in their communities.
- A self-administered ["scratch-and-sniff" test for COVID-19](#) may be around the corner, according to researchers at Penn State, the University of Florida, and Arizona State University.

WEBINARS

- Top Hat: Building Engagement Opportunities into Your Course: Monday, January 18, [9:45-11:30 a.m.](#)
- Partnering with Learning Design to Enhance Your Teaching: Tuesday, February 19, [12:00-12:30 p.m.](#) and [2:00-2:30 p.m.](#)

View the full list of webinars at <https://keepteaching.psu.edu/webinars/>.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- The Pennsylvania Department of Health has an [informational website](#) about the COVID-19 vaccine, which includes a [COVID-19 Interim Vaccination Plan](#). The plan provides information about the distribution of vaccines when available and describes the phases for vaccine administration.
- As faculty prepare for the spring semester, a suggested timeline for communication to students has been developed to reflect the remote learning period and shift to in-person instruction. This includes templates to streamline communications and ensure consistency with key information, as well as technical information to support faculty in using Canvas as a communications platform. All faculty are welcome to adapt this information to suit their specific needs. See [CommTemplates-Spring-2021.docx](#).
- Academic Integrity in the time of COVID: Focus from the Start. Remote and online teaching changes the environmental controls you have in your courses. Students are also experiencing pressures in new or exacerbated ways. One unfortunate consequence of these changes is enhanced potential for academic dishonesty. Encourage academic integrity in your course by addressing the topic explicitly at the start of the semester. Beyond including [formal policies](#) in your syllabus, support academic integrity throughout the semester by leveraging a variety of tools and available [resources](#), including [videos and resources designed](#)

[by students for students](#). Watch this 30-minute [webinar](#) to help spark ideas on how you can foster academic integrity throughout the semester.

- Contingency Planning for Labs-at-Home: With the announcement that Penn State will begin the Spring 2021 term remotely, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) would like to remind all faculty who are considering having students complete hands-on laboratory experiments/projects at home that they must submit protocols to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) for a risk review and approval. Many students' homes are not set up with adequate ventilation, lack environmentally safe disposal procedures, and have insufficient experience to handle if something were to go wrong, along with other concerns about chemical safety and other safety considerations. More information and a form for submitting your proposed labs-at-home are available at: https://ehs.psu.edu/sites/ehs/files/labs_at_home_approval_request.docx and <https://ehs.psu.edu/laboratory-safety/forms>.
- This [FAQ](#) addresses testing requirements for students who must return to their campus communities prior to February 15 or who have remained in their campus communities over winter break.
- With the spring semester beginning with remote learning, Penn State Transportation Services shared an [update on parking regulations and transit service](#) through February.
- [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State's COVID response. 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
- Penn State's ["Keep Teaching"](#) and ["Keep Learning"](#) websites, including many [Spring 2021 instruction-related FAQs](#).
- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- Previous issues of this [Digest](#).
- 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