

**Tuesday, January 19, 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: Is there a phone number I can call if I have questions about COVID-related topics at Penn State?***

**A:** 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 pm. on Saturday.

Before calling, individuals are encouraged to view the University's [official coronavirus information website](#) to see if their questions are answered there. The site includes links to [Penn State COVID-19 resources](#), as well as a comprehensive list of [COVID-19 FAQs](#) for students and families, faculty and staff, and members of campus communities.

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

- Penn State has developed a comprehensive [spring 2021 COVID-19 testing strategy for all campuses](#) that includes both required and voluntary testing during the remote learning period and the in-person portion of the spring semester.
- As part of the University's comprehensive testing strategy for the spring semester, [all Penn State students must meet requirements for COVID-19 testing prior to their return](#) or if they are already living in their campus community.
- A [new document](#) describes a process by which faculty who submit their Annual Report via Activity Insight can contextualize their annual review. Specifically, faculty members are encouraged (but not required) to describe the negative impact the pandemic and other challenges (e.g., societal/racial tension) have had on their work. In addition, faculty are encouraged to describe the innovative or creative ways obstacles were surmounted.
- Penn State has released a [redesigned version of its COVID-19 dashboard](#) for the spring 2021 semester that provides additional information to help students,

faculty, staff, and community members better understand COVID-19 testing results, virus prevalence, and quarantine and isolation capacity on each of the University's campuses.

- As the new semester begins, students, families, faculty, and staff are advised to [visit the University's official virus information website \(https://virusinfo.psu.edu/\)](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/) for the latest coronavirus-related information from Penn State.
- Whether applying their course work to their jobs or using real-life situations in an assignment, many [Penn State World Campus students and graduates have used the pandemic as a learning opportunity.](#)
- Since last spring, 408 medical and physician assistant students in the Penn State College of Medicine have signed up for [more than 16 task forces](#) – each with a critical function to support Penn State Health's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## WEBINARS

- **Designing Your Courses for Inclusion and Engagement:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021, [12:00-2:30 p.m.](#) and [2:00-2:30 p.m.](#)  
Who in your courses are you not reaching? Research suggests that we gain a broader response when attending to principles of inclusive teaching and best practices in inclusive course design. In this interactive session, attendees will review a series of best practices for inclusive teaching and course design contextualized to be implemented in a variety of courses. The session will cover setting course expectations, establishing norms for professional communications and collaborations, and iterative improvements. Faculty will have an opportunity to discuss and reflect on changes they can make in their own courses.

View the full list of webinars at <https://keep Teaching.psu.edu/webinars/>. You can find additional self-paced materials to assist you with your courses on the Keep Teaching Spring 2021 Planning [page](#). If you want to speak with a teaching consultant or a local learning designer about your course, consult the Keep Teaching Contacts and Support [page](#).

- **Addressing Intersectionality to Transform Leadership at Penn State:** Friday, February 19, 2:00-5:00 pm and Friday, February 26, 2:00-5:00 p.m, via Zoom. Interested parties can register via this [Zoom Meeting Registration form](#).

**Who should attend:** All academic leaders and faculty interested in academic leadership who seek to broaden and deepen their understanding of intersectionality and its relationships to leadership within academia.  
Symposium Topic: We will engage in interdisciplinary dialogue within our Penn State community in order to build understanding of the effects of intersectionality

on success and leadership in academia with the goal of identifying pathways for transformational action and informing future initiatives.

**Who we are:** LEADS@PSU is a network of women faculty committed to **LE**ading **A**dvocacy and **A**ction for **D**iverse **L**eader**S**hip at Penn State. We are exploring and acting on issues that impact willingness and preparedness of faculty to engage in leadership.

## KEY REMINDERS FOR 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](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.
- 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.
- [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