

Tuesday, February 2, 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.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- In this video, Steve Tracey, executive director of the Center for Supply Chain Research, explains the [supply chain challenges the country is facing with regard to fighting COVID-19](#).
- In the latest installment of Ask CIDD, Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics Director Elizabeth McGraw explains why [even individuals who have previously had COVID-19 should still look to get the vaccine](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) shows ongoing results for all COVID-19 tests administered on campus since December 19, 2020, for faculty, staff, and students.
- All Penn State students at all locations are reminded that they [must have a negative COVID-19 test result from a University-provided test on file](#) prior to, and within 72 hours of, their return to their campus community.
- A [Transition Week Student Communication](#) document has been developed offering guidance and reminders for instructors as you navigate the transition from remote instruction back to the originally scheduled course mode. Faculty and instructors should be mindful of the fact that students may be in the process of traveling during the week of February 8, and should urge students to be proactive in reaching out to them if they anticipate any conflicts such as moving into a residence hall during a scheduled exam time. Instructors should not change syllabi but are encouraged to be aware of extenuating circumstances that may prevent students from participating in class.

Relevant pages for this information:

- [Semester Planning on Keep Learning](#)
- [Student Communications Recommendations document](#) in the repository:
- [Guides page on Keep Teaching](#) (linked in the Course Policies and Syllabus section at the top)

- After considerable debate at its first meeting of the semester, the Penn State Faculty Senate voted to implement an [optional, opt-in alternative grading system for the spring 2021 semester](#).
- 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 and review other feedback options [here](#). For information about other options for collecting midsemester feedback, see the Schreyer Institute's Midsemester Feedback [page](#).
- A new survey, published by Penn State's Teaching and Learning with Technology, aims to gather feedback from faculty and students about their respective [experiences with remote and hybrid education](#).
- Researchers at Penn State's Center for Human-Computer Interaction has aimed to find out [how students and instructors collectively responded to the abrupt transition to remote education](#).

WEBINARS

- **Engaging Students in a Multi-Audience Classroom via Active Learning:** Thursday, February 18, [1:00-3:00 p.m.](#) Learn key strategies to apply active learning techniques in a multi-audience course setting and modify content of templates that support active learning for utilization in your own courses.

View the full list of webinars at <https://keepteaching.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 Leader**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

- Penn State has announced the [timetable and requirements for students to move into on-campus residences](#) ahead of the resumption of in-person classes on February 15. Before returning to campus, all students are required to participate in COVID-19 testing and have a negative result from a University-provided test on file prior to move-in.
- There are far fewer cases of influenza so far this season, but [people should still be vigilant](#).
- As the University community continues to rely on Zoom as a platform for virtual meetings, Penn State students, faculty, and staff are reminded that [numerous tools are available to help avoid “Zoom bombing”](#).
- Penn State is [exploring options for potential in-person May commencement ceremonies](#) at University Park and the Commonwealth Campuses for spring 2021 graduates.
- Comprehensive information about the three spring semester wellness days is available at <https://wellnessdays.psu.edu/>.
- A new tool that will help students plan for Summer 2021 has been launched on the [University Registrar's website](#). This tool allows students and advisers to complete a university-wide class search for courses that were offered in the previous summer sessions and gives students and advisers a sense of the wide range of summer courses that typically are available to them through Penn State. It is important to note that no decisions about the delivery modes for Summer 2021 have been made; this information and the publication of the Summer 2021 Schedule of Courses should be available in the coming weeks.
- 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