

**Friday, March 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.

### **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.
- Penn State urges University Park students to [take advantage of the walk-up COVID-19 testing on campus](#) if they are concerned that they may have been exposed to the coronavirus.
- David Kennedy, assistant professor of biology, discusses [how the vaccines compare to each other](#) and whether people should wait to get their preferred vaccine.
- [Penn State will host in-person commencement ceremonies in May](#) to mark the class of 2021's completion of their academic experience and to recognize their many accomplishments. Virtual and livestream options will also be available.
- [Penn State's Return to Work Task Group is reconvening](#) to discuss employee guidelines and outcomes for future semesters.
- [Matthew Ferrari, Huck Career Development Professor and associate professor of biology, has been appointed director of the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics \(CIDD\)](#), effective March 19. Ferrari's research examines patterns of disease incidence, and over the past year he has dramatically shifted the focus of his work, becoming very active in the local community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [First-year students at University Park have the opportunity to attend Penn State football's final spring practice](#) on Saturday, April 17 in Beaver Stadium. This is part of the University's phased plan to restore in-person student experiences and to steadily expand organized activities this spring as the pandemic and public health and government guidelines allow.

## WEBINARS

- **Mentoring March – A Workshop Series for Faculty Mentoring Graduate Students.** Effective mentoring is an invaluable component of graduate students' success, and is even more important and challenging during the pandemic, which has introduced even more complexity into developing and maintaining strong mentoring relationships.
  - Addressing Equity and Inclusion, Thursday, March 25, [12:30–1:30 p.m.](#)
- **Academic Freedom and Free Speech in Courses:** Thursday, March 25, [2:00-3:00 p.m.](#)

## KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- April 1 is the deadline for tenure-line faculty in the penultimate year of their probationary period to accept a one-year extension to their probationary period due to COVID-19. By completing the online form "[Confirmation of Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19](#)," the faculty member's probationary period will be extended by one year. Detailed information is available [here](#).
- [President Eric Barron will host webcasts this spring](#) to discuss important topics for the University community about the impact of the pandemic on Penn State, the University's ongoing response and plans as the University substantially expands in-person courses this summer and plans for a full on-campus experience in the fall.
- Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will be extended in the coming weeks.
  - Week of Feb. 15 and onward: Walk-up testing at the Hintz Family Alumni Center will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
  - Beginning Feb.15, employees and students will have separate entrances and separate queues.

This walk-up testing is available to employees who are in the Return to Work database at University Park. Employees in that database also continue to have the option to do the opt-in mail kit testing.

- [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