

Tuesday, March 9, 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: How should I plan for the fall semester given continuing uncertainties about COVID?

A: We are moving toward an on-campus learning environment for fall 2021. Our priorities continue to be the health and well-being of all members of the University community and local communities. Even though we are moving forward with these plans, which include scheduling courses using pre-COVID modes of instruction, we are mindful of the fact that many uncertainties remain. It is important that we continue to be adaptive and flexible given the uncertainties related to the availability of vaccines and the continuation of COVID mitigation measures such as physical distancing. Both individual instructors and academic units should also consider the manner in which courses were delivered in Fall 2020 as a starting-point for a blueprint of a 'Plan B' for the fall semester in the event that a return to full in-person learning is not a possibility. If we don't return to in-person learning, departments/academic units and faculty will not be required to stay with what was offered in fall 2020 in all instances - room for appropriate adjustment will be given.

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.
- [Information about the second of three Wellness Days](#) is now available at wellnessdays.psu.edu. Programming on March 11 will focus on intellectual and spiritual wellness and include live virtual and in-person events, recorded workshops and self-paced options.

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.

- Aligning Expectations, Thursday, March 11, [12:30–1:30 p.m.](#)
- Addressing Equity and Inclusion, Thursday, March 25, [12:30–1:30 p.m.](#)
- **Wellness through Zoom Games and Improv.** Thursday, March 11, [9:00-10:00 a.m.](#)
- **Teaching in Top Hat: Conserving Time and Energy as an Instructor.** Thursday, March 11, [12:15-1:15 p.m.](#)

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- 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.
- [Refresh and Recharge: Virtual Coffee and Conversation for Instructors.](#) Friday, March 12, 3:00-4:00 p.m. Thirsty for more? The Penn State Faculty Advisory Group invites all Penn State faculty to reconvene mid-semester to reconnect. Grab a cup of coffee or tea and share your successes and challenges this semester at this low-key discussion. Instructors will have the opportunity to divide into smaller groups to exchange ideas with faculty across the University. We would love for you to join us – and bring along a colleague!
- The University Staff Advisory Council (USAC) has announced its sponsorship of [speakers for the remaining wellness days](#).
- Penn State is planning a [phased return over the summer semester to a full on-campus learning environment for fall 2021](#). The University's priorities continue to be the health and well-being of its students, faculty, staff and local communities, and the plans for expanded in-person classes have the flexibility built in to quickly respond to changing pandemic conditions, if necessary.
- 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