

Friday, April 16, 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 VIDEO

Matthew Ferrari, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics, discusses the [J&J COVID-19 vaccine](#). The FDA has paused use of that vaccine after six people – out of almost 7 million people who so far have received the vaccine – developed a rare blood clotting disorder.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: *How can I provide input about the upcoming Presidential Search?*

A: Penn State community members across every campus location are invited to participate in a [survey about the upcoming search](#) for the University's 19th president. As part of the [Next Gen Penn State](#) listening process, the survey will seek feedback from students, faculty, staff and alumni as well as other community stakeholders on characteristics, priorities and goals for the institution's next leader.

Q: *Is international travel still suspended?*

A: During the pandemic, [all University-affiliated international travel has been suspended](#) until further notice. Faculty requests for essential travel must be made to the Provost's office (ARL requests must be made to Lora Weiss, and College of Medicine requests must be made to Kevin Black). If the purpose of travel is deemed essential, then Penn State's Global Safety Office will further evaluate the request. All faculty traveling for University purposes must register in Penn State's Travel Safety Network. Requests for essential travel must be made at least 30 days in advance of the departure date. More information is available [here](#). Similarly, all university-affiliated international travel for students is suspended, but an exception process exists for travel deemed academically essential. You may guide students [here](#) to determine the appropriate process for an exception, which must receive all required endorsements and be submitted to the Global Safety Office a minimum of 30 days in advance of departure.

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 researchers have found that people who trust television and Facebook to provide them with accurate information about the coronavirus pandemic are [less knowledgeable about COVID-19](#).
- A study led by Penn State researchers found that in the first months of the coronavirus pandemic, parents reported that they and their children were [experiencing higher levels of mental health concerns](#) such as depression and disruptive and aggressive behavior than before the pandemic.
- [Instructors, staff, and students are urged to remain vigilant in learning the steps to keep Zoom meetings secure](#) and understand why it is critical to refrain from posting links online publicly.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Penn State is continuing its plans for a phased return of in-person learning over the summer semester and full on-campus learning environment for fall 2021. At University Park, [nearly 96% of course sections for fall are set to be delivered as in-person classes](#).
- A team of Penn State researchers [uncovered the first full structure of a tiny protein of SARS-CoV-2](#) and discovered how antibodies interact with that protein. Because the structure appears similar across many coronaviruses, it is an ideal target for advanced treatments and vaccines.
- Students who are experiencing [unavoidable circumstances that will prevent them from being on campus in the fall](#) are asked to self-identify their status by taking action in Starfish.
- Penn State faculty can learn how to [get access to a database of COVID-19 data](#) at a Data Science Community talk on Thursday, April 15 at 1 p.m. [Advance registration is required](#).
- [Penn State is strongly encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to sign up to get a vaccine as soon as they are eligible to receive one](#). Phase 2, which extends vaccine eligibility to all Pennsylvanians age 16 or older, began on April 13.
- [Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule](#)
 - Saturday, April 17: no testing at Pegula Ice Arena or Beaver Stadium (Hintz Family Alumni Center and 101 N. Atherton St. open as usual for

- walk-up and random testing, respectively); testing at the Commonwealth Campuses remains unchanged.
 - Friday, May 7: no random testing (all campuses); one walk-up testing site open (Pegula Ice Arena).
 - Saturday, May 8: no random testing (all campuses); no walk-up testing.
- 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. Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will continue as follows:
 - Walk-up testing at the Hintz Family Alumni Center will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
 - Testing availability will change on the dates listed above. More information is available [here](#).
- [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