**Friday, May 7, 2021**

**News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19**

This 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 Fridays, with additional “special editions” delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](https://vpfa.psu.edu/academicaffairs/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/). For current faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the [“Back to State Info for Faculty”](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/back-to-state-fall-2020-resources/) webpage.

**LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY**

* Penn State’s [COVID-19 Dashboard](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/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’s COVID-19 Operations Control Center (COCC) has developed a [comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation strategy for the transitional month of May and the summer 2021 semester for all campuses](https://news.psu.edu/story/657819/2021/05/06/health-and-safety/penn-state-details-may-and-summer-semester-covid-19) that includes vaccine consideration, masking, testing, contact tracing, and quarantine and isolation.
* Penn State scientists have moved rapidly to apply their expertise toward the [development of complementary COVID-19 vaccine candidates](https://news.psu.edu/story/656862/2021/04/28/research/searching-safeguard).
* A team of researchers in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed models that [project a sharp decline in COVID-19 cases](https://news.psu.edu/story/657727/2021/05/05/research/models-project-covid-19-cases-may-spike-may-sharply-declining-july) by July 2021.
* [Gov. Tom Wolf visited the University Park campus on May 5](https://news.psu.edu/story/657823/2021/05/05/athletics/gov-wolf-joins-barron-franklin-student-athlete-encourage) to join President Barron, head football coach James Franklin, and student-athlete Theo Johnson in urging Penn Staters and Pennsylvanians to get vaccinated for COVID-19.
* [Acting Pennsylvania Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson visited the Regional Vaccination Clinic](https://news.psu.edu/story/657450/2021/05/03/impact/acting-state-physician-general-visits-regional-vaccination-clinic-bjc) at the Bryce Jordan Center on May 3 to address vaccine hesitancy and encourage college students to get vaccinated before the semester ends.
* As instructors return to campus this fall with ideas for updating their courses based on the lessons they've learned over the past year, a new resource has been developed to introduce research-based indicators of quality. The [Course Design Quality Check](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/teaching-and-testing/instruction-and-pedagogy/course-design-quality-check/) provides a short list of ideas for assessing quality, and is accompanied by a 2-hour workshop for instructors who wish to discuss ideas in their own disciplinary context.
* The COVID-19 pandemic, which caused an almost immediate shift to remote learning in March 2021, [dramatically changed the way CAS100 was taught](https://news.psu.edu/story/657494/2021/05/04/academics/digital-learning-tool-public-speaking-class-comes-right-time).
* The 2021 survey1 from TLT regarding challenges students face during the pandemic found that 17% of students found differing layouts in Canvas challenging. To reduce this challenge during the upcoming semester, please remember to use the [research-based guidelines](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/teaching-and-testing/instruction-and-pedagogy/canvas-setup-keep-it-simple/) for setting up Canvas to be effective for your students! (*1 Serpi, A., Robert, J. (2021). The remote teaching experience: 1 year later, How are instructors holding up? Retrieved April 13, 2021, from* [*https://doi.org/10.26207/fdjk-jr25*](https://doi.org/10.26207/fdjk-jr25))
* COVID-19 vaccines may cause [temporary swelling of the lymph nodes in the armpit in the same arm that was injected](https://news.psu.edu/story/657773/2021/05/05/medical-minute-mammograms-and-covid-19-vaccine). This is normal and expected says Shelley Tuzzato, chief technologist for outpatient imaging at Penn State Health Lime Spring Outpatient Center.
* The [Regional Vaccination Clinic at the Bryce Jordan Center has resumed operations as scheduled on Thursday, May 6](https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/pema-details.aspx?newsid=172), offering both the two-dose Moderna vaccine and the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. May 6 through 10 will be the final week that the clinic offers the first dose of the two-dose Moderna vaccine. Starting May 13, the clinic will only offer the second dose of Moderna and the single dose J&J vaccine.

**KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

* As Penn State continues to prepare for the resumption of full on-campus activities and a return to in-person modes of instruction for fall 2021, [separate guidance for both faculty and staff has been crafted](https://news.psu.edu/story/656773/2021/04/27/administration/penn-state-announces-guidance-employees-transitioning-back) to keep employees informed and to help the transition back to campus remain on track.
* Penn State has announced updated guidance and procedures for [hosting events and large gatherings](https://news.psu.edu/story/656586/2021/04/27/campus-life/university-offers-guidance-procedures-events-and-large) both on and off campus.
* Students are reminded of [move-out procedures and COVID-19 safety measures](https://news.psu.edu/story/656774/2021/04/27/campus-life/students-reminded-safety-measures-they-prepare-depart-campus) as they prepare to move out of campus residence halls.
* Penn State strongly encourages all students to [upload their COVID-19 vaccine records](https://news.psu.edu/story/656564/2021/04/28/campus-life/students-urged-upload-covid-19-vaccination-record-through-myuhs) through myUHS.
* [For the spring 2021 semester, optional alternative grading is available for undergraduate students](https://news.psu.edu/story/655762/2021/04/20/academics/alternative-grade-processes-available-undergraduates-and-graduates), and there is an exception process available for graduate students who wish to request optional alternative grades.
* Penn State is strongly encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to [sign up to get a vaccine as soon as they are able to receive one](https://news.psu.edu/story/653458/2021/04/01/campus-life/students-employees-encouraged-get-vaccinated-soon-they-are). Phase 2, which extends vaccine eligibility to all Pennsylvanians age 16 or older, began on April 13.
* [Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/testing-support/)
	+ 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](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/testing-support/).
* [Faculty can still submit questions](https://news.psu.edu/story/628322/2020/08/13/academics/penn-state-faculty-can-still-submit-questions-about-return) related to Penn State’s COVID response. Questions may be submitted [here](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fforms%2Fd%2Fe%2F1FAIpQLSdLJXKUWNxbcqBGf_NJ7x0734cy_GId-aIoiCNYpWPjXAEGsw%2Fviewform&data=02%7C01%7Cagc105%40psu.edu%7C8f277042fb7643a099cd08d86193f571%7C7cf48d453ddb4389a9c1c115526eb52e%7C0%7C0%7C637366635386023185&sdata=4wZ4CcAqoTh1WtIYTtTFGrM%2FfDae7jJurTnlT5C22KQ%3D&reserved=0).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:**

* The University’s comprehensive resources on its [“Back to State” page](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/back-to-state) and [updated FAQs](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/topic/latest-updates) regarding **on-campus work and learning**
* Penn State’s [“Keep Teaching”](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/) and [“Keep Learning”](https://keeplearning.psu.edu/) websites, including many [Spring 2021 instruction-related FAQs](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/frequently-asked-questions/)
* Penn State’s [COVID-19 dashboard](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/covid-19-dashboard)
* Previous issues of this [Digest](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/)
* The online archive of [video messages](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/video-messages-fall-2020-preparations/) from Penn State leaders and experts
* The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](https://hr.psu.edu/covid-19-coronavirus) and [“Return to Work on Campus”](https://sites.psu.edu/returntowork/) resource site
* The [“University Measures” webpage](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/university-measures/), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
* The University’s [health information page focused on personal safety practices](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/stay-well) for individuals at all campuses
* A robust, updated[list of contacts and resources](https://sites.psu.edu/virusinfo/contacts-and-resources-for-penn-staters/)for the University community
* The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](https://covid-19.ssri.psu.edu/) and other resources