

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](#). 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'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](#) 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](#).
- 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](#) by July 2021.
- [Gov. Tom Wolf visited the University Park campus on May 5](#) 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](#) 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](#) 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](#).

- 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](#) 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/fdj-k-jr25>)
- COVID-19 vaccines may cause [temporary swelling of the lymph nodes in the armpit in the same arm that was injected](#). 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](#), 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](#) 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](#) both on and off campus.
- Students are reminded of [move-out procedures and COVID-19 safety measures](#) as they prepare to move out of campus residence halls.
- Penn State strongly encourages all students to [upload their COVID-19 vaccine records](#) through myUHS.
- [For the spring 2021 semester, optional alternative grading is available for undergraduate students](#), 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](#). Phase 2, which extends vaccine eligibility to all Pennsylvanians age 16 or older, began on April 13.
- [Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule](#)

- 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