

Friday, August 13, 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. 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 2021 Resources](#)" webpage.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY:

Q: Can you provide an update on faculty work adjustment requests?

A: In the period of time during which the faculty work adjustment process was reopened – from August 5-12 – more than 275 requests were received. The August 12 deadline has now passed. The committee that reviews work adjustment requests is reviewing these requests as quickly as possible and hopes to have responses to all applicants by early next week, except for those faculty from whom additional information was requested. Faculty will receive a response from the committee regardless of the decision. When a work adjustment is approved, assuming that the request involves changing the mode of a course from in-person to remote, the faculty member must work with their department head/school director/division head/DAA to request a change of course mode. Information about how to make such a request is sent to the unit executive (dean/chancellor) when a work adjustment is approved.

Q: *Can I trust in the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines?*

A: Researchers and medical doctors at Penn State explain that the results of rigorously conducted clinical trials and comprehensive safety monitoring after widespread vaccine uptake among the public suggests there is little to fear, and they strongly encourage those who are on the fence to get vaccinated. Read the full FAQ [here](#).

Q: *August 31, 2021, is approaching rapidly, and I am trying to decide whether to confirm my acceptance of the one-year extension of the provisional tenure period due to COVID-19. What will happen if I confirm my acceptance of the extension?*

A: All tenure-line faculty who were in their probationary period during calendar year 2020 are eligible to confirm acceptance of the extension of the probationary period until April 1 of the penultimate year in the probationary period. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu.

If you confirm acceptance of the extension by August 31, 2021, your tenure clock will be immediately adjusted and any formal review you have scheduled for the 2021-2022 academic year (e.g., 2nd or 4th year review) will take place in 2022-2023. If you are going

up for your sixth-year review, this deadline does not apply as the confirmation of the extension for those in their penultimate year must be received by April 1 of that year. Faculty who wish to confirm acceptance of the extension may do so by completing this [form](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- President Barron shared an [open letter to the Penn State community](#) about Penn State's COVID response.
- In a survey sent to 87,783 Penn State students, 88% of University Park respondents, 73% of Commonwealth Campus respondents, and 84% of World Campus respondents reported being **partially or fully** vaccinated. More details are available [here](#).
- As part of its COVID-19 mitigation plans, [Penn State previously announced](#) that starting Aug. 16, COVID-19 tests will be required for all students moving into on-campus residential housing who have not shared with the University that they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provided a positive COVID-19 test result from the last 90 days prior to arrival. Full details are provided [here](#).
- Recognized student organizations may [return to holding in-person activities](#), including meetings, tabling, and other events for the fall semester, and are no longer required to submit the pre-approval form for events.
- After many months of working and studying from home, Penn Staters are gearing up for this fall's return to campus. To help the transition go smoothly, information technology teams across the University have collaborated on a checklist; see the [article](#) for full details.
- Penn State students who were enrolled at any point during summer session 2021 and who are [experiencing financial need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) are now able to [apply for an emergency financial aid grant](#) from the University's Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) III allocation.
- In a recent study published in the Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness journal, authors from the College of Information Sciences and Technology [developed a new method for assessing public compliance](#) with local mask mandates by analyzing publicly available video feeds.
- 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.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Effective immediately, Penn State will require all students, faculty, staff, and visitors – including those who are vaccinated and unvaccinated – to [wear masks indoors at all campuses](#). Click [here](#) for a list of FAQs related to the University's fall plans.
- With COVID-19 cases rising and the Delta variant becoming the dominant strain, Penn State is adjusting its health and safety plans for the fall 2021 semester. President Barron joined other University leaders for a town hall on August 3 to share the fall plans. Read the full story [here](#).
- Instructors are reminded to utilize the [Canvas setup guidelines](#) as they prepare classes for fall. These guidelines ensure that, in the event of instructor or student illness, information is conveyed consistently across courses.
- Penn State is awarding [COVID-19 relief grants totaling \\$10 million](#) to help students enrolled during the summer 2021 semester cover any component of their cost of attendance or other emergency expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Students who started at Penn State in fall 2020 and spring 2021 did so under extraordinary circumstances due to the pandemic and may have spent the entirety of their first two semesters studying remotely. The University started the First to Second Year Task Force in spring 2021 to identify the implications the pandemic had on students. The [task force has established a system of financial support](#) for colleges, campuses, and units that wish to offer programs and services to second-year students to help that cohort develop the awareness, understanding and connections of a full on-campus experience. Any college, campus, or unit can [apply for up to \\$7,500 in funding](#).
- Penn State is continuing to [encourage students and employees to share their coronavirus vaccination status](#) to help inform the University's decision-making and its COVID-19 management plan. Employees can provide their vaccination status using [SalesForce Health Cloud](#), a secure online platform.
- [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 ["University Status" page](#) and [updated FAQs](#) regarding on-campus work and learning

- Penn State's ["Keep Teaching"](#) and ["Keep Learning"](#) websites, including many [instruction-related FAQs](#)
- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- Previous issues of this [Digest](#)
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and ["Return to Work on Campus"](#) resource site
- 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