

Friday, August 27, 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: What is Penn State's current masking requirement?

A: Penn State requires all students, faculty, staff, and visitors – both vaccinated and unvaccinated – to wear masks indoors at all campuses. Individuals are required to wear masks indoors, including all classrooms, as well as in meeting rooms, common areas in residence halls, and at any indoor events. Read the full FAQ [here](#).

Q: How can students finish their coursework if they're in isolation or quarantine?

A: Most courses will not have a standing remote participation option. Students who test positive and need to enter isolation, as well as students who need to quarantine because of a possible exposure to COVID-19, will be encouraged to reach out to their course faculty. Read the full FAQ [here](#).

Q: What should I do if I feel sick?

A: If you have symptoms of a fever, loss of smell or taste, cough, trouble breathing, or other symptoms of COVID-19, you should stay home and seek medical care. This [article](#) provides further details.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- The University is reminding students, faculty, staff and visitors of changes to COVID-19 policies and resources. Read the full article [here](#).
- Several [FAQs](#) address faculty questions about why faculty cannot choose their own mode of instruction in the fall and the role that faculty play in developing the University's plans for the fall.
- President Eric Barron responded to a COG letter calling for a student-only vaccine mandate. Read the full text [here](#).
- If you are planning to utilize Zoom to stream or create recordings of your in-class lectures, [new guidance is available](#) that includes best practices for using lecture

recordings as a resource for students, and considerations regarding in-person attendance.

- In The Medical Minute, Penn State Health physicians discuss [back-to-school plans and COVID-19](#).
- Of the approximately 14,000 students who moved into University Park residence halls last week, 2,639 of them were required to take a COVID-19 test before moving in because they had not yet provided Penn State with proof that they were vaccinated for COVID-19. Out of those required to test, there were [18 confirmed positives for a positivity rate of about 0.7%](#).
- A U.S.-Norwegian team of researchers, including those from Penn State, has developed models indicating that the [risk of infection by SARS-CoV-2 will likely shift to younger children](#), and that such shifts have been observed in other coronaviruses as they have become endemic.
- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) will be updated [twice weekly](#), on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the fall semester.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Penn State students, faculty, and staff who are not vaccinated for COVID-19 and those who have not shared with the University that they are fully vaccinated will be [required to test weekly for COVID-19](#) throughout the fall semester, or until they share with the University that they have been fully vaccinated.
- 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 due to COVID-19 until April 1 of the penultimate year in the probationary period. 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](#). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at vpfa@psu.edu.
- Penn State's Office of Physical Plant has implemented an [operational strategy to focus on cleaning and ventilation](#) that will promote health and safety while allowing the University to return to pre-COVID-19 classroom capacities for the fall semester.

- University Health Services is administering [free COVID-19 vaccinations for all students](#) in the Student Health Center at University Park, beginning with the first day of classes on August 23.
- The union representing about 2,600 technical service employees has [agreed to follow University requirements for mask-wearing](#), regardless of vaccination status. The agreement goes into effect immediately.
- 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