

Friday, September 17, 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: *I'm vaccinated. What's my actual risk of getting COVID-19?*

A: In [this FAQ](#), Elizabeth McGraw, head of the department of biology, explains that vaccines are highly protective against serious illness, and that the risk of a breakthrough infection is lower in communities with high vaccine uptake.

Q: *Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?*

A: According to Matt Ferrari, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics, [it is a misconception that the COVID-19 vaccines are new and, therefore, unsafe](#). The vaccines have been administered to 175 million Americans, and there have been less than 1,000 cases of myocarditis, pericarditis, or severe blood clots.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- COVID-19 [vaccination data for all Penn State campuses](#) is now available on the University's COVID-19 dashboard.
- Penn State Health is once again making a [public COVID-19 dashboard available on its website](#). The dashboard includes vital information from each of its acute care hospitals. Statistics include total number of adult and pediatric COVID-19 inpatients, number of patients requiring intensive care unit care, and patient vaccination status.
- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) will be updated [twice weekly](#), on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the fall semester.
- This [graphic](#) was created by Denise Solomon, head of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, and was recently updated in collaboration with Penn State Contact Tracing. It is a clear representation of what faculty may do to assist the contact tracing process and their students.

- An online course, “The Science of COVID-19,” led by faculty in the College of Education’s Center for Science and the Schools, gives middle- and high-school students the [opportunity to learn about how scientists approach a novel virus](#).
- The U.S. Department of State is warning that passport processing times are taking, on average, 12 to 18 weeks, not including mailing time. More information is available [here](#). Education Abroad is advising students that if they are planning to study abroad in spring semester, they must [apply for a passport](#) *immediately* and through the *expedited process*.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- The College of Health and Human Development Dean’s Lecture Series hosted a special event, [“Missed Opportunities with COVID-19 Vaccination – Maybe it’s not too Late”](#) on Wednesday, September 15. A recording of the lecture is available at <https://hhd.psu.edu/Deans-Lecture-Series>.
- [Required weekly COVID-19 testing has begun for full-time Penn State faculty and staff](#) who have not shared with the University that they are fully vaccinated. Penn State continues to strongly encourage students and employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19 with the first available option as soon as possible.
- From June 7 to August 23, Penn State [conducted an incentive program](#) for students, faculty, and staff, encouraging them to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and share their vaccination status. Each week, those who shared proof of their vaccination status were eligible for prize drawings. More than 40,000 people participated in the program, and winners included 48 students and 48 faculty/staff at University Park and 24 students and 24 faculty/staff at the Commonwealth Campuses.
- [University Health Services is administering free COVID-19 vaccinations](#) for all students at University Park.
- 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