

Friday, October 1, 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: *How can I enforce mask compliance in my classroom?*

A: This [document](#), published by the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, describes strategies that instructors can use to enforce mask-wearing in instructional spaces. It also describes the steps an instructor can take when a student does not comply with requests to wear a mask properly.

Q: *There was no flu last year. Do I really need a flu shot this year?*

A: Matt Ferrari, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics, explains that it is "more important than ever" to get a flu shot this year. If influenza rates rise, then it could increase demand for COVID testing, which is already limited. It could also increase the burden on health systems, which are already stressed. Read the full FAQ [here](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- All students, faculty, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks indoors at all campuses, including in all classrooms. Further details about the University's masking policies are available [here](#).
- University Health Services, a unit of Student Affairs, is hosting [two flu vaccine clinics for University Park students](#) this fall. The first has already taken place, and the second clinic will take place in the HUB-Robeson Center on October 25 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- A type of drug already used to treat obesity and Type 2 diabetes, when taken six months prior to the diagnosis of COVID-19, was [associated with a decreased risk of hospitalization](#), respiratory complications, and death in COVID-19 patients with Type 2 diabetes.
- [The worst of the pandemic may finally be over](#), according to new modeling results from a consortium of researchers, including those from Penn state, advising the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Penn State researchers have created a novel framework that can predict with reasonable accuracy the [changes in the SARS-CoV-2 virus' spike protein](#) that may confer increased infectivity to the virus.
- Masks have become a source of contention among children and, unfortunately, a [perfect set-up for bullying](#). Dr. Ramnarine Boodoo, child psychiatrist at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, discusses ways in which parents can mitigate the risk for bullying.
- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) will be updated [twice weekly](#), on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the fall semester.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- University Park students who are subject to required weekly COVID-19 testing and who have missed at least three weeks of testing have been notified that they are out of compliance with the University's health and safety policies and [have been placed on interim suspension](#) through the Office of Student Conduct.
- The [COVID-19 testing site at Pegula Ice Arena closed](#) on Wednesday, September 22. COVID-19 testing at White Building is available from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sundays through Fridays for students living on or near the University Park campus, and faculty and staff who are working on campus.
- University Park employees who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should use [this document](#) to identify a testing site in the community.
- University Park faculty and instructors received a [letter](#) from Executive Vice President and Provost Nick Jones about students who have been placed on interim suspension due to failure to comply with the University's required weekly COVID-19 testing. The letter describes the consequences for students on interim suspension and how faculty and instructors should handle those students' absences.
- 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