

Friday, October 8, 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.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: How should I plan to teach my class if campus is closed due to weather?

A: In the event of a change in normal campus operations due to weather, students and instructors may not have the same access to University facilities and resources (such as Wi-fi) and may have other commitments such as childcare. In recognition of this, Senate Policy 45-00 states that, "when a campus closes, faculty may not move a cancelled residential instruction class meeting to a synchronous online meeting." Instructors may, however, provide asynchronous online instruction to make up for the cancelled class. Further details about how in-person, hybrid, remote synchronous (for those with an approved work adjustment), and Web courses should proceed in the event of a change in campus operations, please see this [document](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- More than five weeks into the fall semester, the [COVID-19 vaccination rates among students, faculty, and staff at University Park are continuing to rise](#) as the positivity rate of University COVID-19 testing declines. As of October 7, the overall vaccination rate among all students at University Park is more than 87%, and the seven-day positivity rate of all testing conducted by Penn State at University Park is 0.4%. Penn State is urging students who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19 to begin the process now so that they can be fully vaccinated before leaving campus for the Thanksgiving break.
- A [document](#) has been developed that assists academic unit heads (department heads, director of academic affairs, school directors, division heads) in planning for the possibility of a faculty member's extended absence from a class, or multiple student absences in a single class, that may strain instructional capacity. Faculty members may also find this document useful to review.
- Penn State's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) will be updated [twice weekly](#), on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the fall semester.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- 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.
- 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.
- [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.
- 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