**Friday, December 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](https://vpfa.psu.edu/academicaffairs/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/). For current faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more, visit the [“Back to State 2021 Resources”](https://vpfa.psu.edu/back-to-state-2021-resources/) webpage.

**PUBLICATION NOTE**

All of us in the Office of the Provost want to thank each of you for your efforts on behalf of Penn State, and for your support of our students and one another. Penn State's official semester break will begin Monday, December 20 and we hope each of you has a restful and restorative semester break. The Faculty Digest will also be taking a break and you will find the next edition in your inbox on Friday, January 7, 2022 (unless, of course, there is a need for a special edition prior to that date).

**LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY**

* Penn State has determined that, if the injunction against the federal contractor vaccine mandate is lifted by the courts, it will [apply to all Penn State locations](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/all-penn-state-locations-now-impacted-federal-contractor-vaccine-requirement/). The University has concluded that it is not practicable to have different standards at different campuses because many Penn State employees work, collaborate, and interact on multiple campuses and at locations across the commonwealth. This means that every Penn State employee – including faculty, staff, technical service employees, Penn State Extension staff, students supported on wage payroll – and also graduate students supported on graduate assistantships – will need to be either fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have an approved medical/disability or religious-related accommodation by January 4.
* Penn State plans to begin the semester in person as planned; however, with local COVID-19 hospitalizations at an all-time high, and the uneven spread of the omicron variant creating uncertainty, Penn State officials are reminding the University Park campus community, out of an abundance of caution, to be [prepared to alter plans](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/officials-monitoring-pandemic-conditions-spring-return-university-park/), should the University need to start the spring semester remotely. Penn State will update the community on December 30.
* All Penn State employees must be fully vaccinated or have an approved accommodation. Individuals who are granted an accommodation will be [required to test weekly for COVID-19 throughout the spring semester](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/spring-covid-testing-plans-employees-announced/). Compliance mechanisms will be in place to reinforce the testing requirement and details on compliance will be shared closer to, or at the beginning of, the spring semester.
* This [article](https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/university-updates-availability-covid-related-resources-during-winter-break/) contains a list of COVID-19-related resources for employees.
* Penn State strongly encourages its students and employees to get their [booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/penn-state-strongly-recommends-covid-19-boosters-employees-and-students/).
* Penn State students who have not shared with the University proof that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 [will continue to have to test weekly throughout the spring 2022 semester](https://www.psu.edu/news/administration/story/weekly-testing-unvaccinated-students-continue-spring/).

**VACCINATION MANDATE RESOURCES**

Many faculty members who indicated they are vaccinated have not yet uploaded their vaccination card. Even if you’re fairly certain that you uploaded your vaccine card to Salesforce, please check to be sure by visiting [Salesforce Health Cloud](https://psu-healthcloud.force.com/vaccine/s/vaccineimageupload). If you do not have a vaccine card uploaded into Salesforce, you will be considered out of compliance with the vaccine mandate.

Apply for a religious accommodation at <https://affirmativeaction.psu.edu/covid-19-information/>. More information is available [here](https://news.psu.edu/story/673976/2021/10/25/process-request-religious-accommodations-vaccine-mandate-now-available).

Apply for a medical/disability-based accommodation at <https://hr.psu.edu/sites/hr/files/COVID19MedicalDisabilityAccommodationRequestForm.pdf>. More information is available [here](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/process-request-medical-disability-vaccine-mandate-accommodations-now-open/).

Information on where to find a vaccine provider can be found [here](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/vaccine-information/#palocations). Those who have received two shots are urged to get a booster if eligible.

**KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

* Penn State’s [indoor masking policy will remain in effect](https://www.psu.edu/news/campus-life/story/indoor-masking-requirement-set-remain-effect-spring-2022-semester/) into the spring 2022 semester.
* All faculty received an email from Yvonne Gaudelius, vice president and dean for undergraduate education, and Regina Vasilatos-Younken, vice provost for graduate education and dean of the graduate school, on December 8 regarding [student interim suspensions](https://vpfa.psu.edu/files/2021/12/Instructors12.2021.Gaudelius.Younken.pdf).
* Technical teaching assistants (Tech TAs) debuted in March 2020 to support faculty teaching in virtual and hybrid modes. The [program is set to continue for the spring 2022 semester](https://www.psu.edu/news/information-technology/story/technical-teaching-assistants-available-spring-2022/).
* Penn State leaders encourage the community to take health and safety precautions over the winter break. The U.S. government has imposed travel restrictions from eight southern African countries. Travelers, whether traveling for University purposes or personal reasons, should [prepare for the possibility of disrupted travel plans](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/university-advises-community-travel-safely-amid-new-travel-restrictions). Employees planning University-affiliated international travel must follow the University’s travel guidance and request travel via the Travel Safety Network at least 30 days in advance. Employees are expected to return to the U.S. by their approved return date and extended periods of work from outside the U.S. are not permitted. While minor travel delays can be accommodated, those unable to return will be placed on unpaid leave until they return to the U.S. More information on remote work outside of the U.S. is available [here](https://sites.psu.edu/academicaffairs/files/2021/12/Statement-about-Remote-Work-from-Outside-the-U.S._12-10-21.pdf).
* The University has announced a [continuation of all current guidance on work arrangements](https://www.psu.edu/news/story/current-work-arrangements-faculty-and-staff-continue-spring-2022/) for Penn State employees during the spring 2022 semester. During the upcoming spring semester, faculty will continue to provide in-person instruction. The “work adjustments” process for faculty to request remote instruction for health-related reasons concluded Oct. 29. If a faculty member has not submitted an application and experiences a significant change in their medical condition or the condition of an immediate family member, they should contact their Human Resources strategic partner to discuss next steps.
* [Faculty can still submit questions](https://news.psu.edu/story/628322/2020/08/13/academics/penn-state-faculty-can-still-submit-questions-about-return) related to Penn State’s COVID response. Questions may be submitted [here](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fforms%2Fd%2Fe%2F1FAIpQLSdLJXKUWNxbcqBGf_NJ7x0734cy_GId-aIoiCNYpWPjXAEGsw%2Fviewform&data=02%7C01%7Cagc105%40psu.edu%7C8f277042fb7643a099cd08d86193f571%7C7cf48d453ddb4389a9c1c115526eb52e%7C0%7C0%7C637366635386023185&sdata=4wZ4CcAqoTh1WtIYTtTFGrM%2FfDae7jJurTnlT5C22KQ%3D&reserved=0).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:**

* The University’s comprehensive resources on its [“University Status” page](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/university-status/) and [updated FAQs](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/topic/latest-updates) regarding **on-campus work and learning**
* Penn State’s [“Keep Teaching”](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/) and [“Keep Learning”](https://keeplearning.psu.edu/) websites, including many [instruction-related FAQs](https://keepteaching.psu.edu/frequently-asked-questions/)
* Penn State’s [COVID-19 dashboard](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/covid-19-dashboard)
* Previous issues of this [Digest](https://www.vpfa.psu.edu/penn-state-pandemic-news-digest-archive/)
* The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](https://hr.psu.edu/covid-19-coronavirus) and [“Return to Work on Campus”](https://sites.psu.edu/returntowork/) resource site
* The University’s [health information page focused on personal safety practices](https://virusinfo.psu.edu/stay-well) for individuals at all campuses
* A robust, updated[list of contacts and resources](https://sites.psu.edu/virusinfo/contacts-and-resources-for-penn-staters/)for the University community
* The Social Science Research Institute [website featuring pandemic-related insights from University experts](https://covid-19.ssri.psu.edu/) and other resources