

**Friday, January 28, 2022**

## **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 2021-2022 Resources"](#) webpage.

### **LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY**

- Results of research led by faculty in the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management indicated that nearly half of adults now participate in outdoor recreation on at least a monthly basis, and [approximately 20% may be new to outdoor recreation during the pandemic](#).
- Maciej Boni, associate professor of biology was part of a global collaboration that described the [genetic profile and origins of the Omicron variant](#).
- In the Medical Minute, Dr. Jessica Ericson, pediatric infectious disease physician at Penn State Children's Hospital, discusses children who are most susceptible to severe illness from COVID and [how to navigate COVID protocols and assess risk](#).

### **VACCINATION MANDATE RESOURCES**

Apply for a religious accommodation at <https://affirmativeaction.psu.edu/covid-19-information/>. More information is available [here](#).

Apply for a medical/disability-based accommodation at <https://hr.psu.edu/sites/hr/files/COVID19MedicalDisabilityAccommodationRequestForm.pdf>. More information is available [here](#).

Information on where to find a vaccine provider can be found [here](#). Those who have received two shots are urged to get a booster if eligible.

### **KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

- Students who have not shared with the University that they are fully vaccinated must test weekly throughout the spring semester. Enrolled students who are noncompliant with the weekly required testing will [lose Canvas access until they become compliant](#).
- As part of its ongoing efforts across many channels to expand Americans' access to free COVID-19 testing, the Biden-Harris Administration is requiring insurance

companies and group health plans to cover the cost of over-the-counter (OTC), at-home COVID-19 tests, so people with private health coverage can get them for free starting January 15th. CVS Caremark prescription coverage, a component of Penn State's Aetna health care plans, will now cover the cost of OTC COVID-19 at-home test kits for those employees and their families enrolled in a Penn State health plan. Health plan enrolled employees have three options to purchase OTC COVID-19 at-home test kits: (1) purchase test kits **at the pharmacy counter** of a [participating pharmacy](#), with no up-front out of pocket costs (**CVS Caremark has confirmed that some pharmacies are not currently offering Option 1 due to localized challenges**); (2) Purchase test kits at a **participating pharmacy** and then submit a claim for reimbursement via the CVS Caremark reimbursement page; or (3) purchase test kits at a **non-participating pharmacy or non-pharmacy location** and then [submit a claim for reimbursement](#) (the maximum reimbursement for these kits will be \$12). More information is available [here](#).

- At University Park, [drop-in and by-appointment asymptomatic COVID-19 testing is available seven days a week at White Building for students](#) living on or near campus. At all Commonwealth Campuses, student tests will be distributed by the student health center or designated office, or ordered through the mail via the Vault Health mail-in test kit.
- [Students, faculty, staff, and visitors are urged to wear well-fitting, multi-layered masks](#) in accordance with the latest University and federal guidance.
- This [article](#) contains a list of COVID-19-related resources for employees.
- [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