

Friday, March 4, 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.

PUBLICATION NOTICE REGARDING THIS DIGEST

The Digest will not be published on Friday, March 11 during Spring Break.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- With cases of COVID-19 declining on Penn State campuses and across the state and nation, University officials are [adjusting Penn State's indoor masking policy](#) to no longer require face masks be worn in many indoor common spaces on campuses in counties designated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to have low or medium [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) beginning Monday, March 7. Based on the new CDC guidance, at this time, all Penn State campuses except for the College of Medicine and the Schuylkill campus will adjust their masking requirements.
- The White Building COVID-19 testing site at University Park will have limited hours March 5-12:
 - Saturday, March 5: 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 - Sunday, March 6: CLOSED
 - Monday, March 7, through Friday, March 11: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
 - Saturday, March 12: CLOSED
- In the wake of airspace restrictions on Russian airlines and some changes to flight routes or itineraries due to the war in Ukraine, Penn State Global reminds the Penn State community of the [Travel Safety Network \(TSN\)](#). Penn State employees wishing to travel to a non-U.S. destination on University business must first [record their University-affiliated international travel in the TSN database](#). Travel information should be recorded at least 30 days in advance of the travel or as soon as possible once travel is planned.
- A [schedule and registration portal](#) are now available for Penn State's Class of 2020 Commencement Celebration Weekend that will take place April 29 to May 1. The weekend will feature [commencement ceremonies on April 30](#) along with other activities to provide a special opportunity for the Class of 2020 and their parents, friends and families to celebrate in person, following the virtual ceremonies that first took place in 2020.

- Several FDA-approved drugs — including for type 2 diabetes, hepatitis C and HIV — [significantly reduce the ability of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 to replicate in human cells](#), according to new research led by scientists at Penn State.

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

- Penn State will award nearly [\\$17.35 million in federal COVID-19 emergency relief grants](#) to help students enrolled during the spring 2022 semester cover any component of their cost of attendance or other emergency expenses due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- April 1 is the deadline for tenure-line faculty in the penultimate year of their probationary period to accept a one-year extension to their probationary period due to COVID-19. By completing the online form “[Confirmation of Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19](#),” the faculty member’s probationary period will be extended by one year. Detailed information is available [here](#).
- **A message to faculty and instructors from Penn State Contact Tracing and Student Support Services.** Since Fall 2020, Student Support Services has been emailing faculty to alert them that a student in their class is not permitted to attend in-person classes due to isolation or quarantine. Within that notification is a date when the student can return to class safely. Students' isolation and quarantine timeframes are subject to change based on symptoms and test-out options. Presently, faculty may be receiving multiple email updates on one student. Because of the changes in the CDC guidelines that have resulted in a significant increase in Q/I date changes, we are adjusting our processes to notify faculty when a student may not attend class and when they are able to return, as outlined below:
 - Faculty and advisers will continue to receive an initial email from Student Support Services with the most conservative date that a student may return to class as determined by Penn State Contact Tracing.

- If applicable, Contact Tracing will send students emails providing earlier dates on which they can "resume regular activities" if their dates change for some reason (e.g., changes in symptoms, test-out options). Students will be asked to forward this email to their instructors before they return to class. This email will originate from contacttracing@psu.edu. It is appropriate for you to ask to see their email from Contact Tracing if they return to class and did not forward it to you in advance.
 - This new process will streamline communication to faculty and decrease confusion and allow Student Support Services to spend more time reaching out to support students in isolation or quarantine. If there are any concerns regarding notifications received, faculty may contact Student Support Services to get clarification about a student's dates.
 - An updated "Student Quarantine & Isolation" reference guide for faculty has been posted [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