

**Friday, July 10, 2020**

## **News Digest: Penn State's Preparations for Fall 2020**

This email provides faculty with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates as the University prepares for the Fall 2020 semester. Watch for these news digests in your email twice each week, typically on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous news digests are [archived here](#).

### **FACULTY FAQs**

***Q: Should I avoid handing out papers to my students because of the risk of spreading the virus?***

**A:** Paper poses low risk for coronavirus transmission. Classroom requirements related to mask wearing as well as encouragement of hand sanitizing should reduce the risk of transmission via paper syllabi, handouts, or exams. Instructors should use their own judgment and deliver documents via Canvas or other digital tools and administer exams electronically to diminish concerns about the use of paper. Such tools also support Penn State's broader commitment to sustainability.

***Q: What steps is Penn State taking to mitigate the possibility of airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in University buildings/facilities?***

**A:** SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has been found in large respiratory droplets that travel short distances (6 feet) and precipitate out of the air quickly, in small aerosolized particles that can travel farther and reside in the air for longer periods, and on surfaces. The relative contribution of these three modes to transmission is uncertain, but evidence suggests that respiratory droplet transmission is the predominant mechanism. Regardless, Penn State is considering the risks of all three possibilities and taking steps to mitigate each.

1. Requiring the wearing of masks in all classrooms and buildings, and in other spaces per the [Governor's guidance](#), limits the risks of all three modes of transmission (droplet, aerosol, and surface). Masks limit the emission of both large and small particles from an infectious wearer, which protects others from contact with virus particles, and can limit the frequency with which people touch their faces.
2. Limiting building and classroom density also addresses the risks of both droplet and aerosol transmission and allows for proper social distancing of 6 feet. Increasing the distance between individuals reduces the chances of contact with respiratory droplets and the number of people that can contribute to the density of aerosolized particles.

3. In addition to the [critical measures of universal masking and social distancing on Penn State campuses](#), which will help mitigate large droplet and aerosol transmission of the virus, the University is undertaking several steps to further mitigate the risk. Using a multi-layered approach, staff from the Office of Physical Plant (OPP) are checking and modifying, as necessary, the mechanical systems for every facility to ensure the systems are working properly and installing higher efficiency filters in central air handling equipment for buildings that have ventilation systems. [OPP is also modifying how buildings operate](#) to provide more ventilation, air circulation, and building flushing wherever possible. All of these actions are in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers).
4. [OPP is taking a multi-pronged approach to cleaning and disinfecting spaces](#). All desks, podiums, doorknobs, elevators, restrooms, and other high-touch areas will be cleaned and disinfected daily with EPA-approved disinfectants. Exterior entrances will also be cleaned and disinfected daily. The multi-pronged approach also includes use of electrostatic sprayers (which positively charge the cleaning products to adhere to surfaces and help kill the virus) and working with a Penn State virologist to look at the long-term efficacy of disinfecting materials on surfaces. More information about cleaning protocols is available on the University's [Environmental Health and Safety website](#).

## LATEST NEWS

- In a message published Wednesday, [Penn State President Eric Barron addresses recent changes in regulations](#) by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, their impact on international students and the University's opposition to the rule changes.
- Penn State's Interfraternity Council voted Tuesday to [indefinitely suspend Greek life social events](#) out of concern for public health amid the pandemic.
- [In a special Q&A on the use of masks](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19, infectious diseases physician [Dr. Catharine Paules](#) with [Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center](#) and pediatric allergist and immunologist [Dr. Tracy Fausnight](#) with [Penn State Children's Hospital](#) share their expertise and debunk myths about the practice.
- A [new University Libraries webpage](#) provides key information regarding pandemic-driven operational changes, access to resources, and much more.
- A [virtual speaker series is underway for new Commonwealth Campus students](#) in summer programs.

## REMINDERS

- The University has [updated directives for meetings, visitors, and Visiting Scholars on campus](#), as well as [updated guidance and requirements for University-related domestic travel](#). All Penn State employees must follow [existing travel guidance](#).
- Penn State [faculty are encouraged to submit questions](#) via [this online form](#) so leadership can respond to them in upcoming communications.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

- The University's comprehensive resources on its ["Back to State" page](#) and [updated FAQs](#) regarding plans to resume on-campus work and learning this fall
- Penn State's ["Keep Teaching"](#) and ["Keep Learning"](#) websites
- The online archives of [video messages](#) from Penn State leaders and experts previous [news digests](#), and pandemic-related University [news stories](#)
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and ["Return to Work"](#) resource site
- The ["University Measures" webpage](#), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
- 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