

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

News for Faculty: Penn State's Preparations for Fall 2020

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates as the University prepares for the Fall 2020 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are [archived here](#).

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY

Q: *Can employees make changes to their health care due to the pandemic?*

A: The Internal Revenue Service recently allowed employers to offer workers flexibility with their health care plans and Flexible Spending Accounts, including health care and dependent care. Penn State is allowing employees to make some adjustments to their health care plans.

For the unabridged response to this FAQ, [read the story in Penn State News](#).

Q: *How do I invite and encourage students who attend my class remotely to interact with the activities and materials that I have designed for them to engage with course content, peers, and me?*

A: Engaging students with course content through reflective activities, peer discussions, and instructor feedback increases the likelihood of their achieving learning outcomes. Consult the following resources for engaging your remote students:

- [Strategies for Creating Engaging Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning Environments](#)
- [Engaging Students from Day One, and Participating in Student Discussions](#)
- [Engaging Students Series](#)
- [Zoom Questioning Strategies to Increase Engagement](#)
- [Encouraging Communication and Interaction on Video](#)
- [Schreyer Institute's General Instructional Recommendations for Remote Teaching](#)
- [Increasing Learner Engagement in Remote Settings](#)

You can read other FAQs related to Fall 2020 instruction on the [Keep Teaching website's FAQ page](#).

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State President Eric Barron [will host a Virtual Town Hall event](#) at 3 p.m. on Thursday July 30, to provide updates and discuss the University's plans for the

start of fall semester. The event will be shown on [LiveEvents.psu.edu](https://liveevents.psu.edu), and will be archived and online for later viewing.

- A [community-wide committee](#) is preparing for Penn State students and visitors to return to the local area.
- Teaching and Learning with Technology team members [spent the summer](#) identifying and filling needs within learning spaces in support of resident and remote students.
- Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims [shared a letter](#) to the fraternity and sorority community, calling on students to help minimize the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- [Guidance for instructors regarding PPE](#) in classrooms and laboratory spaces is now available.
- Why should masks cover your nose? [In this video](#), infectious disease expert Dr. Elizabeth McGraw explains why covering the entire face is so vital and offers an anecdote that illustrates the effectiveness of correct mask wearing.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- The [new “Countdown to Fall: Student Support and Engagement Series”](#) includes a series of hourlong Zoom sessions for instructors and staff at all Penn State campuses. Preregistration is not required. Upcoming sessions (all to be held from Noon to 1 p.m. EDT) include:
 - Wednesday, July 29: Supporting Campus Community Diversity and Inclusivity
 - Thursday, July 30: Preparing Students to Be Tech-Ready
 - Friday, July 31: Innovative Virtual Connections

The Zoom webinars can be accessed at <https://psu.zoom.us/j/99280363051>.

- In addition to the aforementioned “Countdown to Fall” series, copious development and training opportunities are available to faculty in preparation for the Fall 2020 semester. [Upcoming webinars for instructors](#) at all Penn State campuses include:
 - Wednesday, July 29, 1-3 p.m. EDT: [Engaging Students Synchronously](#)
 - Thursday, July 30, 12-1 p.m. EDT: [Classroom Technology](#)

Find information about many more faculty development and training opportunities on the [“Keep Teaching” website’s dedicated webinar page](#).

- Penn State [faculty are encouraged to continue submitting questions](#) via [this online form](#) so leadership can respond to them in upcoming communication, such as this news digest for faculty.
- **SEEKING YOUR FEEDBACK:** The University-wide task force focusing on Campus Classroom Technology needs your input on a critical decision point about the use of chalk/whiteboards in classrooms and their integration into Zoom and other online sessions. **By Friday, July 31, please complete this short, five-minute [Classroom Technology Survey](#)** about your interest in using digital alternatives to supplement chalk/whiteboard use while teaching mixed-mode instruction (face-to-face/remote synchronous) this fall. This survey is not anonymous. Instructor names will be used to deploy touchscreen monitors to the learning spaces where they are most needed.
- A [new resource now available to all Penn State faculty](#) (requires WebAccess authentication) provides a suggested timeline for communication to students regarding Fall instruction, as well as templates to streamline this process and ensure consistency with key information, and technical information to support faculty in using Canvas as a communications platform. Faculty can use and adapt this resource to suit their specific needs.

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, including many [Fall 2020 instruction-related FAQs](#) and [new webinars](#)
- The online archive 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 on Campus"](#) 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