Tuesday, August 25, 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: If students have visible flu-like symptoms in a face-to-face class setting, are instructors able to ask them to leave?

A: If a student is exhibiting symptoms in a classroom, the instructor is empowered to ask the student to leave the class and to see a health care provider. The student should not return to class until they are no longer exhibiting symptoms or have been cleared by a health care provider and can provide proof of clearance to the instructor. If the student refuses to leave, the instructor should follow the guidance in the classroom guidance document.

Q: What resources are available to me to help me with technology related to remote instruction?

A: Tech TAs are available to help faculty with technology related to Zoom and other remote instruction platforms. Faculty can complete an intake form. Demand is high and additional TAs are being hired. Other resources to assist faculty with technology include Virtual Office Hours and Tech Tutors.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- An updated “Instruction, Universal Masking and PPE Recommendations” document has been posted that includes guidance about neck gaiters, cleaning procedures for clear masks, and recommendations for performance settings (music/vocal/theater).

- Faculty have a number of resources available to them during these challenging times. Resources include the Employee Assistance Program and an Employee Assistance Fund.

- President Barron welcomed students via a video message and reminded all Penn Staters that they each have a responsibility to help keep the University community safe.
• Penn State launched a publicly-accessible COVID-19 dashboard to share data on its COVID-19 surveillance testing program as well as the number of individuals in isolation and quarantine. The dashboard can be accessed here.

• Penn State students and employees should continue to take precautions against COVID-19, such as wearing face masks, practicing physical distancing, washing your hands, not touching your face, and avoiding contact with those who are sick. This article offers guidance about what to do if you are sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19.

• Penn State has begun a randomized COVID-19 surveillance testing program to identify asymptomatic carriers of the virus and monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 across all campuses.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

• President Barron shared a message with the Penn State community following reports of students congregating in large numbers outside of East Halls on the University Park campus.

• Students, faculty, and staff at all Penn State campuses are reminded to take advantage of resources and review critical information related to health and safety guidelines and academic support.

• Students who were selected for – but have not taken – a pre-arrival COVID-19 test must complete the process and share a negative test outcome if they wish to attend classes or participate in other activities on any Penn State campus. Students who do not complete pre-arrival testing by Friday, August 28 will be subject to registration cancellation. At University Park, pre-arrival testing can be completed this week from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. in a tent next to the Biobehavioral Health Building facing the HUB lawn, a tent near Eisenhower Auditorium, or a tent at Gate B at the Bryce Jordan Center.

• All active Penn State students have been provided details about how to review and acknowledge the new language version of the student COVID-19 Compact. Students who previously acknowledged the original pledge can now void their acknowledgement if they choose, and may now acknowledge the modified version.

• Faculty can still submit questions related to Penn State’s plans for a return to classrooms in the fall. Questions may be submitted here.
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, August 26: Pre-arrival Testing, Surveillance Testing, Contact Tracing: A Conversation with Kelly Wolgast

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