

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19

This twice-weekly email is designed to provide faculty and instructors with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates during 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](#). For current Fall 2020 faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the ["Back to State Info for Faculty"](#) webpage.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY

Q: I have a student in class who told me they went and got tested because they were concerned that they may have been exposed. Will I be notified if this student needs to quarantine?

A: It is good news that students are getting tested if they feel they may have been exposed. Students who self-identify as contacts are not part of the formal contact tracing process and instructors will not be notified through the normal process. When students are tested through University testing processes, they are counselled as to what qualifies as a close contact and advised to quarantine for 14 days from the time of that contact irrespective of whether the test comes back positive or negative as symptoms may appear between 2-14 days after the last contact with a positive individual. If a student lives in the residence hall and identifies themselves as a contact, they should speak with their RA or Residence Life Coordinator to relocate to the designated quarantine space on campus. Students are encouraged to contact their instructors and make them aware of their situation, and instructors are encouraged to provide the same support they would for those identified through the formal process. Students who believe they are a close contact can report this to the University using the Student COVID-19 Self-Referral Form at <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/covidsupport>.

Q: What is Penn State's COVID-19 surveillance testing program for employees?

A: As part of Penn State's multi-pronged COVID-19 testing program, [surveillance testing of approximately 1% of the population](#) – including employees – will be conducted each day throughout the semester.

Asymptomatic cases require isolation and assessment of the level of any potential spread of the virus in the employee population. By testing as many people as possible, Penn State hopes to minimize the risk of infection on each campus and in local communities.

For answers to employee questions about this testing program, please visit <https://virusinfo.psu.edu/faq/topic/faculty-and-staff> and select "Surveillance Testing for Employees" on the left side of the page.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State has [updated its public COVID-19 dashboard](#) with the University's on-demand testing and random testing results from tests administered during the period of September 18 to 20, as well as new University testing results from the prior week.
- [Penn State leaders will host a virtual Town Hall event](#) at 3 p.m. on September 23 to answer University faculty and staff questions about the return to campus and Penn State's ongoing response to the coronavirus.
- [Wastewater sampling for coronavirus on campus](#) and in the surrounding community could alert University decision makers to a potential outbreak several days before individuals exhibit symptoms of an infection. Data from this sampling are shared with Penn State's COVID-19 Operations Control Center and regularly with University leadership.
- A Penn State College of Medicine research team will continue to work on [developing a vaccine for COVID-19](#) using more than \$400,000 in funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Penn State has implemented a contact tracing process in coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Health as part of a layered tracing and testing approach for students and employees at all campuses. [This article](#) describes the contact tracing process in detail.
- New [COVID-19 reporting forms](#) allow students, staff and faculty to easily submit information about students who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who identify themselves as close contacts of students who have tested positive.
- Penn State is taking a three-pronged approach to [2020 flu vaccine clinics](#) throughout the commonwealth. Vaccines are free for all Penn State employees, and employees can choose from one of three options. [Vaccine clinics for students at University Park](#) will be held beginning September 21.
- Please check [Penn State's COVID-19 dashboard](#) for the latest on-demand testing and random screening results.
- [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State's plans for a return to classrooms in the fall. Questions may be submitted [here](#).

- Professional 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:
 - Thursday, September 24, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., [Considerations in Teaching Offshore International Students](#)

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 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](#)
- Penn State's [COVID-19 dashboard](#)
- The online archive of [video messages](#) from Penn State leaders and experts
- 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