Tuesday, October 13, 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.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: How can I help students get the support they need during the pandemic?

A: Instructors can refer students to the Keep Learning website, https://keeplearning.psu.edu, which is a central source of information for students at all Penn State campuses. Faculty are encouraged to make students aware of this website, which provides students with easy access to physical and mental health resources, academic advising, technology support, and information about the Spring 2021 semester. The site includes an extensive list of questions and answers about a variety of topics.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State’s COVID-19 dashboard is updated every Tuesday and Friday with results of both on-demand and random surveillance testing.

- Different types of virus testing are being conducted at the University this fall, and each one is billed and paid for differently. Required, random surveillance testing is free to both students and employees. Penn State is also providing free asymptomatic walk-up testing at University Park for both students and employees working on campus. Finally, students who seek care at University Health Services or their on-campus health center will be billed via their insurance for any evaluation or testing that is provided.

- President Barron’s next live webinar will be held at 4 p.m. on Thursday, October 15, to discuss the University’s ongoing response to the pandemic and other related topics. Faculty and staff are encouraged to join online.

- President Barron wrote a letter to the University community emphasizing the need for fans to cheer on the Nittany Lions safely during the upcoming football season.

- Penn State College of Medicine researchers say that a large, international study of COVID-19 patients confirmed that cardiovascular disease, hypertension,
diabetes, congestive heart failure, and other diseases can increase a patient’s risk of dying from the virus.

- With mounting scientific evidence that anosmia, or loss of smell, is one of the most specific symptoms of COVID-19 infection, sensory scientists in Penn State’s College of Agricultural Sciences have launched a webpage to encourage people to perform a daily smell test.

- Watch this video about how steroids work against COVID.

**KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

- The recorded October 8 Q&A session with President Eric Barron is now available to view online. The Q&A was the first live webinar in a new series of discussions with faculty members about Penn State’s ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic and other related critical topics.

- Penn State’s walk-up COVID-19 testing location at University Park is moving from the HUB Parking Deck to the main concourse of Pegula Ice Arena beginning Friday, October 9. Penn State is offering asymptomatic on-demand testing for University Park employees who are listed in the University’s Return to Work database. The Pegula site is open for employees only from 9 to 10 a.m. Monday through Friday, or employees may walk up at any time during the center’s normal operating hours of 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

- During the month of October, Penn State Commonwealth Campuses will be offering opt-in, asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for faculty and staff who are working on campus and wish to be tested.

- To support the mental health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff, Penn State will build “wellness” days into the spring 2021 academic calendar in place of the traditional week-long spring break.

- Penn State policy officers will begin to enforce the State College Borough COVID-19 safety ordinance on the University Park campus.

- The October 4 virtual Town Hall event for students and families is now archived and available for viewing at https://LiveEvents.psu.edu.

- Since the beginning of the fall semester, Housing and Food Services and Residence Life collaboratively developed and launched additional services especially for students in quarantine and isolation due to COVID-19. Penn State employees from outside those areas also are stepping up and volunteering their time to support ill students.
• Gathering feedback from students at an early point in the semester helps gauge students’ learning and provides instructors with valuable data for making course adjustments. Students appreciate being asked for feedback, especially when instructors respond with changes to improve learning. Surveying students is one method for gathering feedback. PSU learning surveys specific to the four COVID instructional modes have been created for you to download into your Canvas course to collect student feedback on the learning modes. Click [here](#) for instructions on how to download them into your course. For information about other options for collecting midsemester feedback, see the Schreyer Institute’s Midsemester Feedback page.

• Share a story about your successes in the Fall 2020 semester, in-person, mixed, or remote! We’re looking for stories from instructors, students, and staff. Your experiences can help motivate and inspire others and generate new ideas that benefit the Penn State community. You may also recognize someone who you think is doing great work. You can find the form [here](#), which we encourage you to distribute within your department.

• Penn State Human Resources, in partnership with Health Advocate, has announced a three-pronged approach for the 2020 flu vaccine clinics throughout the commonwealth. Employees can choose one of three options to get a flu shot.

• [Faculty can still submit questions](#) related to Penn State’s return to classrooms this fall. Questions may be submitted [here](#).

• The “Keep Engaging” Fall Webinar Series will be delivered via Zoom, from noon to 1 p.m. every Monday through November 16. Upcoming webinars include:

  o Monday, October 19, 12:00-1:00 p.m., Barriers & Bridges to Success for Our Financially Insecure Students

• Professional development and training opportunities are available to faculty. [Upcoming webinars for instructors](#) at all Penn State campuses include:

  o Wednesday, October 14, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., What’s Working, What’s Challenging: Faculty/Student Panel Discussion on Fall 2020
  o Wednesday, October 14, 2:00-4:00 p.m., Creating, Finding, and Assessing Instructional Video to Engage 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