Tuesday, February 23, 2021

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 Spring 2021 semester. Watch for these emails on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional “special editions” delivered periodically. Previous faculty news digests are archived here. For current faculty guidance, resources, FAQ documents, and more visit the “Back to State Info for Faculty” webpage.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: I heard that the CDC recommends two masks; is this required?

A: Neither the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) nor Penn State is requiring the use of a double masks. CDC guidance suggests double masking as a means to improve how individuals can wear their masks. The full FAQ is available here.

LATEST NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACULTY

- Penn State’s COVID-19 Dashboard shows ongoing results for all COVID-19 tests administered on campus since December 19, 2020, for faculty, staff, and students.

- Appointments are still available for University Park students to receive their required universal COVID-19 test from February 24 through February 26 at White Building.

- At the end of 2020, more than 12% of Pennsylvania households were experiencing hunger – the highest rate since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to researchers in the College of Agricultural Sciences.

- New “peel-and-sniff” postcards are part of a public awareness campaign spearheaded by sensory researchers in the College of Agricultural Sciences’ food science department. Students, faculty, staff, and others visiting well-traveled areas of Penn State campuses may have noticed the cards, which help people quickly identify possible COVID-19 infections.

WEBINARS

- Developing Asynchronous Assignments and Resources: Thursday, February 25, 12:00-12:30 p.m. and 2:00-2:30 p.m.

• **Innovative Teaching at Penn State (ITAP) Lunch Series: Asking New Questions About Teaching and Learning During and After COVID-19.** Friday, February 26, **12:20-1:10 p.m.**

• **Managing Classroom Conversations:** Friday, February 26, **12:00-1:00 p.m.**

• **Addressing Intersectionality to Transform Leadership at Penn State:** Friday, February 26, 2:00-5:00 p.m., via Zoom. Interested parties can register via this [Zoom Meeting Registration form](#).

**KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY**

• This [article](#) provides an overview of COVID-19 resources for faculty.

• While Penn State has not been named a distribution site for COVID-19 vaccines, the [University has made comprehensive plans to assist quickly](#) if asked.

• Penn State has [launched a new platform, Salesforce Health Cloud](#), that increases the University’s ability to manage coronavirus case investigations and helps speed up contact tracing processes for students and employees.

• Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will be extended in the coming weeks.
  
  o Week of Feb. 15 and onward: Walk-up testing at the Hintz Family Alumni Center will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
  
  o Beginning Feb. 15, employees and students will have separate entrances and separate queues.

  This walk-up testing is available to employees who are in the Return to Work database at University Park. Employees in that database also continue to have the option to do the opt-in mail kit testing.

• In Pennsylvania, the state Department of Health and county health departments are responsible for [COVID-19 vaccine distribution](#), which is being done in a phased approach with health care workers and those in long-term care facilities in the initial phase (Phase 1A). At this time Penn State is not a point of distribution for the vaccine, but has a comprehensive plan developed for how the University could quickly activate should this change. In the meantime, those that are eligible are strongly urged to sign up as soon as possible. Faculty, staff, and students should visit [Pennsylvania’s vaccine website](#) for information on when they may be eligible to receive a vaccine and where those vaccines may be available in their communities.

• **Faculty can still submit questions** related to Penn State’s COVID response. Questions may be submitted [here](#).
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
- Penn State’s “Keep Teaching” and “Keep Learning” websites, including many Spring 2021 instruction-related FAQs
- Penn State’s COVID-19 dashboard
- Previous issues of this Digest
- 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