Friday, March 26, 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.

FEATURED VIDEO

Elizabeth McGraw, professor and Huck Scholar in entomology, discusses whether people who have already had COVID-19 should get vaccinated.

QUESTION FROM FACULTY

Q: **How can I respond to students who are in need of support while also attending to my own needs?**

A: The Red Folder initiative is a guide to help faculty, staff, and others who interact with students to recognize, respond effectively to, and refer distressed students at Penn State. The Red Folder is designed to provide a supportive framework and clear set of steps for referrals. Units within the university can request a training from CAPS on the Red Folder via the CAPS outreach request form.

As a faculty member, advising and supporting students who are overwhelmed with the stress of the pandemic and other stressful situations can be emotionally draining. A document, developed by Health Advocate, provides tips for handling emotional fatigue and practicing good self-care. More information about the services Health Advocate provides 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.

- Penn State and local leaders today appealed to students and local residents to redouble their safety efforts to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

- Penn State held a livestream event for accepted students and their families considering applying to Penn State, “Class of 2025: A Virtual ‘Welcome to the Penn State Community,’” on March 25.
• In support of the “Mask Up or Pack Up” campaign, frontline healthcare workers share advice on staying vigilant and how everyone can do their part to help protect the Penn State community.

• University Park students are urged to take advantage of walk-up COVID-19 testing on campus if they are concerned that they may have been exposed.

• An interdisciplinary team of Penn State College of Engineering and College of Agricultural Sciences researchers worked to optimize the Building and Grounds’ hand sanitizer management and maintenance operation, managed by the Office of Physical Plant, by designing and developing a wireless sensor system.

WEBINARS

• Re-Writing Study Guides Using Depth of Knowledge Framework: Tuesday, March 30, 12:05-1:05 p.m.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

• Penn State has updated its guidelines for employees concerning when to invite visitors to campuses during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

• April 1 is the deadline for tenure-line faculty in the penultimate year of their probationary period to accept a one-year extension to their probationary period due to COVID-19. By completing the online form “Confirmation of Extension of the Probationary Period Due to COVID-19,” the faculty member’s probationary period will be extended by one year. Detailed information is available here.

• 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.

• 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