Friday, April 2, 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

Leslie Parent, vice dean for research and graduate studies in the Penn State College of Medicine, discusses why some people develop fever, fatigue, headache, and muscle aches after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, while others have no symptoms at all.

QUESTIONS FROM FACULTY

Q: When is the next wellness day?

Wednesday, April 7 is Penn State’s third and final wellness day of the spring semester. More information is available here. On wellness days, no class meetings will happen (unless the faculty member has received an exemption) and no assignments are due.

Q: Can visitors still come to campus?

A: Units are strongly encouraged to continue to engage with visitors remotely whenever possible. Full guidance on bringing visitors to campus 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 is strongly encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to sign up to get a vaccine as soon as they are eligible to receive one. Phase 2, which extends vaccine eligibility to all Pennsylvanians age 16 or older, will begin on April 19.

- President Eric Barron and guests answered an array of questions from Penn State faculty and staff during a livestream about the University’s response to the coronavirus, employees returning to work on campus, health and safety of the community, and others topics related to the pandemic.
• Physicians at Penn State Health urge people to continue to wear a mask and follow other COVID mitigation guidelines, even if they have been vaccinated.

• Penn State students are serving as data collectors and data managers in a nationwide research study to understand mask usage on college campuses.

• Researchers in the College of Medicine found an increase in the number of cigarettes smoked per day during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic by nearly a third of surveyed Pennsylvania smokers.

• Penn State Health, with the assistance of community organizations and local government officials, has provided pop-up vaccination clinics at locations in Berks, Dauphin, Lancaster, and Lebanon counties, specifically targeted to underserved communities.

WEBINARS

• Plans to Support Residential Students Who Cannot Return in Fall 2021: Tuesday, April 6, 12:00-1:00 p.m. and 3:00-4:00 p.m. Read the news article here.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

• Students who completed quarantine and isolation at University Park are being surveyed to collect feedback about their experiences.

• Over the past year, the Manufacturing and Sterilization to Address COVID-10 (MASC) Initiative has mobilized to protect health care providers and communities across Pennsylvania.

• Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule
  o Friday, April 2: no random testing (all campuses); one walk-up testing site open (Pegula Ice Arena).
  o Saturday, April 3: no random testing (all campuses); no walk-up testing.
  o Saturday, April 17: no testing at Pegula Ice Arena or Beaver Stadium (Hintz Family Alumni Center and 101 N. Atherton St. open as usual for walk-up and random testing, respectively); testing at the Commonwealth Campuses remains unchanged.
  o Friday, May 7: no random testing (all campuses); one walk-up testing site open (Pegula Ice Arena).
  o Saturday, May 8: no random testing (all campuses); no walk-up testing.

• Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will continue as follows:
  o Walk-up testing at the Hintz Family Alumni Center will be available Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Testing availability will change on the dates listed above. More information is available here.

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