Tuesday, April 13, 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.

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 continuing its plans for a phased return of in-person learning over the summer semester and full on-campus learning environment for fall 2021. At University Park, nearly 96% of course sections for fall are set to be delivered as in-person classes.
- A team of Penn State researchers uncovered the first full structure of a tiny protein of SARS-CoV-2 and discovered how antibodies interact with that protein. Because the structure appears similar across many coronaviruses, it is an ideal target for advanced treatments and vaccines.
- Students who are experiencing unavoidable circumstances that will prevent them from being on campus in the fall are asked to self-identify their status by taking action in Starfish.
- Penn State faculty can learn how to get access to a database of COVID-19 data at a Data Science Community talk on Thursday, April 15 at 1 p.m. Advance registration is required.

WEBINARS

Registration for the all-virtual Invent Penn State Venture & IP Conference, happening April 15-16, is open to the public. The event includes several panels related to COVID:
- Life Science Ventures Addressing COVID-19: Thursday, April 15, 4:25-5:20 p.m.
- The State of Venture and Growth Capital in the COVID-19 Era: Thursday, April 15, 1:45-2:35 p.m.
KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

- Researchers from the Penn State College of Medicine report that social distancing and lockdowns due to COVID-19 may have affected clinical researchers’ ability to finish trials.

- Penn State will award cash grants to more than 23,000 students under federal COVID-19 relief funding allocated to the University from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II, part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA).

- In this article, Penn State faculty offer tips for avoiding burnout during the pandemic.

- For a small group of people who have had COVID, symptoms can persist for months and range from mild to incapacitating. Physicians at Penn State Health discuss the symptoms they see, who is susceptible to being a “long hauler,” and when people should call a doctor about ongoing symptoms.

- Four faculty and staff in the College of Information Sciences and Technology co-authored an article, published in EDUCAUSE Review, that examined technology-based teaching practices that have emerged in higher education during the pandemic and have been shown to improve student engagement.

- 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, began on April 13.

- Spring 2021 Holiday/Special Events Testing Schedule
  - 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.
  - Friday, May 7: no random testing (all campuses); one walk-up testing site open (Pegula Ice Arena).
  - Saturday, May 8: no random testing (all campuses); no walk-up testing.

- 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. Walk-up COVID-19 testing hours at the University Park campus will continue as follows:
  - 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.
• 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