Friday, May 21, 2021

News for Faculty and Instructors: Penn State and COVID-19

This weekly email is designed to provide faculty and instructors with Penn State’s pandemic-related news and updates. Watch for these emails on 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.

• At a special meeting on May 12, the Faculty Senate passed a nonbinding COVID-19 vaccine resolution as well as a letter addressed to the Board of Trustees related to the Next Gen Penn State and search process to find the University’s next president.

• A new study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that 1 in 6 parents first allowed their adolescent children to have an alcoholic drink with their families during the COVID-19 shutdown.

• According to Penn State College of Medicine researchers, https://news.psu.edu/story/643864/2021/05/18/research/sufficient-knowledge-sense-information-overload-evident-early, but were overwhelmed with worries about mixed messages and distrust of some sources.

• A Penn State course, PHP 597, “Vaccines, Immunity, and Homeland Security: Case Study of the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic,” gave students the chance to learn the science of the vaccine in real time.

• Students in Penn State College of Medicine support Penn State’s vaccination efforts via a student vaccine task force whose members answer questions, monitor patients, and give vaccine doses.

KEY REMINDERS FOR FACULTY

• Penn State is currently evaluating the new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and update from the Pennsylvania Department of Health regarding masking for fully vaccinated individuals and will provide additional guidance to the University community. While the review is underway, masking and physical distancing is expected by all individuals —
regardless of vaccination status — inside Penn State campus buildings and on public transportation across all campuses.

- Penn State’s COVID-19 Operations Control Center has announced the schedule for drop-in COVID-19 testing at University Park through late June.

- In a new study, Penn State College of Medicine researchers found that people living with HIV had a 24% higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and a 78% higher risk of death from COVID-19 than people without HIV.

- A recent survey by the Center for Survey Research at Penn State Harrisburg’s Institute of State and Regional Affairs found that many Pennsylvanians are “vaccine hesitant.”

- Penn State’s COVID-19 Operations Control Center (COC) has developed a comprehensive COVID-19 mitigation strategy for the transitional month of May and the summer 2021 semester for all campuses that includes vaccine consideration, masking, testing, contact tracing, and quarantine and isolation.

- The Regional Vaccination Clinic at the Bryce Jordan Center has resumed operations as scheduled on Thursday, May 6, offering both the two-dose Moderna vaccine and the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Starting May 13, the clinic will only offer the second dose of Moderna and the single dose J&J vaccine.

- 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.

- 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 “University Status” 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’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