

Friday, July 3, 2020

News Digest: Penn State's Preparations for Fall 2020

This email provides faculty with Penn State's pandemic-related news and updates as the University prepares for the Fall 2020 semester. Watch for these news digests in your email twice each week, typically on Tuesdays and Fridays, with additional "special editions" delivered periodically. Previous news digests are [archived here](#).

NEW VIDEO MESSAGES

- For more information on how to prepare to manage classrooms this fall, [watch this video featuring Danny Shaha](#), assistant vice president for Student Affairs.
- Listen and watch as Dr. Cindy Whitener, infectious diseases physician at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, [shares key learnings from the front lines](#) about the efficacy of wearing masks and the personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended for hospital work and everyday use.

All video messages from University leaders and experts are [archived here](#) for viewing.

FACULTY FAQs

Q: *Is there a plan in case the virus flares up? What would be the trigger for having students vacate campuses again and move from in-person instruction to remote delivery only?*

A: Penn State is prepared to be nimble and responsive based on the latest information, monitoring and evolving virus infection rates. The University will employ strategies to create an effective detection and management system for all of its campuses, including [testing, contact tracing](#), and monitoring and reacting to trends in data at the community, state, and national levels to see if a pattern is emerging, so leaders can act accordingly.

All classes that are planned to have in-person meetings will have contingency plans for reverting to remote instruction modalities if health circumstances require ending in-person learning earlier than Nov. 20. All future decisions will be based on the best available public-health information, in the interest of the safety and well-being of Penn State students, faculty and staff.

Several factors may lead to additional distancing measures or adjustments to campus-based residential course delivery. These include changes in the virus caseload of a campus or region; a county's status under the governor's red-yellow-green guidelines; the capacity of the local health care system; community compliance with health and safety protocols; and additional risks, such as the onset of an early virulent flu season.

Faculty experts in epidemiology, medicine, and public health are continuously monitoring county, state, and local disease data, which will allow the University to respond to any changes in the pandemic that would require proactive steps to mitigate and manage any potential outbreaks. Any recorded upticks will be analyzed and, as needed, decisions about the status of in-residence instruction will be made on a campus-by-campus basis, taking into consideration guidance from public health officials.

The University's 16 task groups focused on responding to the pandemic and its impacts have been scenario planning for months. These scenarios necessarily include one in which Penn State must send students home from a campus and revert to remote learning. If our public health advisers become concerned that it is no longer safe for students and employees to be on our campuses, we are prepared to quickly take action and change course.

Q: *What do I do if a student in my class refuses to wear a mask or follow other health and safety guidelines?*

A: The [Classroom Guidance for Instructors](#) document is posted on the website for the [Office of Student Conduct](#). It describes the steps that faculty can take to provide a positive learning environment and manage COVID-related concerns in the classroom. The guidance includes a sample statement for faculty to include in their course syllabi and a series of steps that faculty can take if a student fails to adhere to health and safety requirements. Students who fail to comply with requirements will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and will not be allowed to return until the matter is addressed through Penn State's conduct process. Learn more about preparing to manage classrooms this fall in this [video featuring Danny Shaha](#), assistant vice president for Student Affairs.

LATEST NEWS

- The University is asking students to [complete a poll in LionPATH regarding their intentions about returning to campus](#) in the fall.
- [Transportation Services will resume on-campus operations](#) on Monday, July 6.
- The [Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State will not present public performances](#) on the University Park campus in Fall 2020.

REMINDERS

- Penn State is augmenting outreach to all faculty via multiple platforms to share key information. To support this effort, [faculty are encouraged to submit questions](#) via [this online form](#) so leadership can respond to them in upcoming communications.

- The University's "[Keep Teaching](#)" and "[Keep Learning](#)" websites are being updated regularly with resources for faculty and students to prepare for the fall semester. The latest updates include:
 - Updates to the [flexible instructional modes overview page](#) and more detailed information on the [in-person instructional mode page](#).
 - Updates to the technology-related FAQs on the [Frequently Asked Questions page](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain comprehensive, updated information at any time, please review:

- The University's comprehensive "[Back to State](#)" page and nearly 50 [updated FAQs](#) regarding plans to resume on-campus work and learning this fall
- The "[University Measures](#)" [webpage](#), which summarizes steps Penn State is taking in response to COVID-19
- The Penn State websites dedicated to [teaching](#) and [learning](#) in Fall 2020
- The new online archives of [video messages](#) from University leaders and experts and [previous news digests](#)
- The [Office of Human Resources COVID-19 information site](#) and "[Return to Work](#)" resource site
- The University's [health information page focused on personal safety practices](#) for individuals at all campuses
- Updated guidance for University-related [travel](#) and [meetings and events](#)
- 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