

From: [Walsh, J. Patrick](#)
To: PPSA-MEMBERS@LISTS.UPENN.EDU
Subject: From the PPSA Chair: Welcome Back to Campus
Date: Tuesday, August 31, 2021 10:10:00 AM

Dear Professional Staff colleagues:

The [Penn Professional Staff Assembly](#) ("PPSA") is an organization of staff volunteers whose aim is to enrich the sense of community for Penn staff. PPSA serves as both an informational and support network: we advocate for the interests of professional staff to senior leadership through University Council, and we provide outlets for us to break out of our departmental "silos" and explore the robust resources that our campus community (both physical and virtual) has to offer.

We are now embarking on yet another unique and challenging semester. While it is the hope of mine and the PPSA Board that we can gather in-person for social and professional enrichment activities that we enjoyed pre-March 2020, we plan to continue holding most (or all) of our events in the virtual space for the foreseeable future.

Below is a brief list of matters-of-interest, including a preview of PPSA programming for the coming year:

RETURN TO CAMPUS CONCERNS

Many of us are cautious or concerned about returning to campus over the coming weeks. PPSA is sincerely grateful for its partnership with the Division of Human Resources (HR), which supports PPSA's initiatives. To address inquiries we received from Penn staff during the summer months, HR has shared with us a précis on efforts undertaken to make the campus repopulation as safe and effective as possible. That summary follows my signature, below. In addition, the latest coronavirus-related announcements can be found here: <https://coronavirus.upenn.edu/announcements>.

WEBINAR ADDRESSING FALL SEMESTER QUESTIONS – SEPT. 1, 4pm ET

To address frequently-asked-questions, the Faculty Senate welcomes PPSA members to participate in a webinar it will host on Wednesday, September 1, 4:00-5:00pm ET, featuring senior decision-makers addressing the fall semester return-to-campus process. Registration info can be found at <https://provost.upenn.edu/senate/faculty-senate-seminar-series>.

SCHEDULE YOUR GATEWAY COVID-19 TEST BY SEPT. 17

Announced on August 25, all faculty and staff are required to complete a "gateway" COVID-19 test by Friday, September 17. [Please visit this page to schedule your test](#) (PennKey required). A "[scheduling tip sheet](#)" is also available.

UNIVERSITY SHARED GOVERNANCE

PPSA appoints staff representatives to all seven University Council Committees. They will report on their committees' progress to the PPSA Board throughout the year. If you wish to raise an issue to any of the committees, please contact the Tri-Chairs using ppsa@lists.upenn.edu, and we will make sure your concern is addressed through the relevant committee representative.

- [List of committees and their rosters & charges](#)
- [UC Committee reports 2020-2021](#)

PPSA PREVIEW

Below is a preview of some upcoming PPSA offerings, with more to be added throughout the year:

- **Virtual Employee Resource Fair** (October 14-15, 2021)

Voter Registration and Empowerment (Fall 2021)

- **Anti-Blackness: Moving from Ally to Accomplice** (Fall 2021)
- **Advancing Your Career at Penn** (Spring 2022)
- **PPSA Book Club**, starting in late September with *All We Can Save*, in partnership with Penn Climate Week 2021. [Click here to join the Book Club](#). (Monthly except Jul., Aug., Dec.)
- **PPSA Connection**, a campus networking tool for Penn staff. Each month, you will be randomly "matched" with another Penn staff member and encouraged to meet up for coffee, lunch, or a simple virtual conversation. [Get Connected with other PPSA members by registering here](#). (Powered by Spark Collaboration software)
- **Weekly Newsletter**: the weekly PPSA newsletter will return starting next Tuesday, September 7, and will contain a list of upcoming PPSA offerings, followed by a list of Penn community offerings. If you want your community offered to be included in our newsletter, please visit this page: <https://ppsa.upenn.edu/your-events/>.

We are always on the lookout for ideas for programming or social occasions that are of interest to Penn staff. Please reach out at any time to suggest something!

On behalf of my PPSA Tri-Chairs (Anne Corcoran-Petela, Chair-Elect, and Kris Forrest, Past Chair), I wish you a smooth and safe transition into this fall semester. I welcome hearing from you for any reason (walshjam@upenn.edu)!

Yours respectfully,
Patrick

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J. Patrick Walsh, M.S.Ed.

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The following information was shared with PPSA on August 24, 2021, courtesy of the Division of Human Resources:

The University has worked to ensure that safety is a top priority since the onset of COVID began in February 2020. Committee involvement on the return to campus plans were not only done centrally, but rather, included involvement of both school and center representatives, ensuring the voices of the University were shared. Also, the Senior EVP and the Provost, now Interim Provost, meet multiple times per week to consult with experts, address planning issues, and receive updates on how to best repopulate campus.

Some important points to note include:

- As of August 1, 2021 90% of faculty, and staff have been fully vaccinated
- As this situation evolves, leadership has kept the University abreast of COVID guidelines and

updates, via the following channels:

- [Announcements | Coronavirus \(upenn.edu\)](#) (over 40 messages published)
- Messages from medical professionals and others: [Penn Cares Videos | Coronavirus \(upenn.edu\)](#) (9 video messages)
- EHRS, together with FRES, implemented a multi-faceted program to minimize the potential for COVID-19 transmission within Penn facilities. The optimization of building ventilation systems is one of the components of this program.
- EHRS has also put out several best practices for a safe return to campus that can be found <https://ehrs.upenn.edu/covid-19>

In addition, based on feedback from schools and centers, some of the work that has been done centrally include but are not limited to:

- Communications from Human Resources packaged as navigating and thriving through times of transition
- Well-being resources for “return to campus” on the HR COVID-19 page
- Included articles in *myHR* (and will continue to)
 - August 11: [Understanding Diverse Responses to Change](#)
 - July 14: [Reroute Your Thoughts on Commuting. Did You Know: PennCard’s Return-to-Campus Information](#)
 - June 30: [A Systematic Look at Men's Health, Accepting People Behind the Masks](#)
 - May 19: [New Parking Card Option](#)
 - May 5: [Awareness and Action for Mental Health, Leadership to Help You Thrive](#)
- April 21: [Pet Prep for Workplace Transitions, Supporting Your Emotional Health](#)
- Workshops are scheduled almost daily through December
 - [Work-life Happiness Method, Inner Skills for Flourishing](#)
 - [Mindfully Moving Through Change – 4 Week Mindfulness-Based Program](#)
 - [4 Week Positive Momentum Mindfulness Course \(plus 2 bonus coaching calls\)](#)
- One-hour sessions are also offered such as:
 - [Developing a Daily Practice for Calm](#)
 - [Time and Energy Management: Ideas for Sustainable Life Balance](#)
 - [Mindfulness and Social Justice](#)
 - [Mindfulness and Anxiety](#)
 - [Radical Resilience: Ideas for Sustainable Life Balance](#)
- The full list of workshops are listed [here](#)
- There will be knowledge link modules on flexible work
- A representative from Human Resources will speak at a forum hosted by Penn Women Faculty at the end of September, the topic is childcare since there have been many that are affected by this area

In short, while we know this has not been an ideal situation for many and a potential cause for worry, we can assure you that leadership is making decisions with the safety of faculty, staff, and students as the utmost priority.

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