Dear Neighbors,

As the University welcomes students to campus and as schools in Princeton and neighboring towns again open their doors, I offer my best wishes.

The coronavirus pandemic is still with us, and the delta variant presents new challenges. As we have done since the beginning of the pandemic, we have instituted a range of measures designed to decrease the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

Our combined vaccination rate for students, faculty, and staff was at 95 percent as students began arriving in late August, and it will be even higher by the time this issue of Community Connections arrives in your mailbox.

With our rigorous testing program and other precautionary measures, we are confident that our campus is an unusually safe place in which to conduct our vital teaching and research mission.

We will continue to monitor information from our campus and from medical and scientific sources and adjust procedures accordingly as we did last spring, when we kept infection rates remarkably low. We remain grateful for the assistance and cooperation of town, county and state officials in keeping our campus and surrounding communities as safe as possible.

We are proud to note that the University continues to host public vaccination clinics and are pleased that many residents of nearby towns have received their shots here.

Our communities and our campus are in a stronger position now than we were a year ago to overcome the challenges of COVID-19. As we continue to work together to protect one another and resume more normal activities, I wish you all a healthy and productive fall.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Eisgruber
President

A full complement of Princeton University students is back on campus and circulating about town for the fall semester.

Marking the first time that the University resumed full, in-person teaching and operations since March 2020, the academic year formally began Aug. 29 with Opening Exercises. Classes began Sept. 1.

In the interfaith opening ceremony held at University Chapel, President Christopher L. Eisgruber expressed his excitement at the return of students to campus. “It is so good to see you and so good to be together,” he said, “I have missed these moments of collective joy and excitement over the past year.”

After leaving the chapel, members of the incoming Class of 2025 participated in the traditional “Pre-rade” procession from the chapel to and through FitzRandolph Gate on Nassau Street. The first-year students were joined in the procession by sophomores, who were unable to attend in-person Opening Exercises last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic continues, the University is operating with many public health and safety precautions in effect. All students, faculty and staff must be vaccinated and be tested for the coronavirus weekly. The limited number of people in the campus community for whom vaccination exemptions have been granted for medical, disability or religious reasons must be tested twice each week.

Masks are required for everyone inside University buildings, although individuals in private rooms or offices may remove their masks.

Campus buildings remain accessible only to students, faculty and staff through the University’s pass card system. Visitors are allowed on the grounds but may not enter University-occupied buildings without permission.

The University continues to monitor cases daily on campus and in the surrounding area. University officials continue to follow guidance from federal, state and local civil and medical authorities on mandates and best practices in keeping community members safe and healthy. University policies can and will shift accordingly as new information and new guidance become available.

The University hosted a series of public vaccination clinics over the summer and through September. Information on any future clinics would be posted on the University’s COVID Resources website, covid.princeton.edu. The website also includes a dashboard that reports daily and weekly totals on symptomatic and asymptomatic cases reported among students, faculty and staff.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Eisgruber
President

University welcomes all students for the fall semester while COVID protocols continue.

Members of Whitman College show their residential college pride, flashing a "W" hand gesture.

Photo by Denise Applewhite, Office of Communications.
Here’s the buzz on getting around on the Princeton campus

Now that the cicadas have burrowed back down into the ground, the Princeton campus is walkable once again without the buzzing and crunching that Brood X created over the summer.

Visitors to campus this fall will find many chang- es underway in addition to the familiar sites of iconic buildings and places like Nassau Hall and Cannon Green. As you pass through FitzRandolph Gate from Nassau Street and walk to the right of Nassau Hall, look for the restored Oval and Tompkins Bridge. Just like the tigers flanking the Oval with Points sculpture by Henry Moore. Just like the tigers flanking the main door to Nassau Hall, Oval with Points remains a “must” photo stop for visitors. Take a selfie or a family portrait in front of this classic work of art with a good-as-new patina, restored by conservators over the summer.

Princeton expands outreach in Mercer County, boosts community engagement with new hires

The Office of Community and Regional Affairs has expanded its staff, adding veteran non-profit administrator Duncan Harrison Jr. as assistant director for regional affairs. The office has also appointed Melissa Mercuro, director of human services for the Municipality of Princeton, as associate director for community relations. She succeeds Erin Metro, who retired. Harrison and Mercuro report to Kristin Appelget, director of Community Engagement, Communication, and Community Outreach. She joined the University in August.

Harrison has a master’s in public administration from the City University of New York and a bachelor’s in sociology from Delaware State University. He served as councilman-at-large in the city of Trenton from 2014 to 2018. Mercuro has broad experience in the public sector with a focus on community engagement, communication, and community outreach. She joined the University in 2016. She began working at the Municipality of Princeton as interim director of human services in 2018 and was named director a year later. She managed all services and programs offered by the department, including public assistance, emergency homelessness assistance, pandemic relief, Welcoming Week, immigration outreach, the summer youth employment program, and holiday and back-to-school charitable drives.

Employees donate backpacks with school supplies

For the fifth year the offices of Community and Regional Affairs and Finance and Treasury partnered with WB Mason to offer Princeton University employees the opportunity to purchase a backpack to donate to the annual Princeton Human Services’ School Supplies Drive. In addition to the backpacks, WB Mason donates supplies including binders, note pads, pens, crayons, and tissues. This year, Princeton University employees donated 127 backpacks filled with supplies.

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New regional Princeton-led hub to accelerate tech innovation

Aiming to accelerate the transformation of scientific discoveries into technologies that improve everyday lives, a Princeton University-led consortium of regional universities will form a new innovation network with a $15.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) Northeast Hub is one of five new hubs announced recently in a nationwide NSF-funded network of universities formed to accelerate the economic impact of federally funded research. It will deliver benefits in health care, energy and the environment, computing, artificial intelligence, robotics, advanced materials and other areas while building skills and opportunities among researchers from all backgrounds, including those historically underrepresented in entrepreneurship.

Princeton will be the principal institution in the hub, with the University of Delaware and Rutgers University as partner institutions. The hub will include five initial affiliates: New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and Rowan University in New Jersey; Lehigh University and Temple University in Pennsylvania; and Delaware State University, an Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The hub will expand by adding affiliates each year.

“Princeton is excited to lead this initiative to develop the talent and dynamism of our region’s researchers,” said President Christopher L. Eisgruber. “I am especially pleased that the hub will assist those who historically have faced barriers to opportunity and expand the societal impact of new discoveries and innovations.”

With funding from NSF over five years, the hub will provide entrepreneurial training, mentoring and resources to enable researchers to form startup companies that translate laboratory discoveries into breakthrough products and services. The hub will employ the NSF I-Corps entrepreneurship training approach, which focuses on understanding the needs of potential customers, first-hand exploration of industrial processes and practices, and confronting the challenges of creating successful ventures based on scientific discoveries.

The I-Corps program is based on the “lean startup” methodology in which innovators rapidly iterate on their products and business plans based on customer feedback and market needs. The new hubs will extend the capability of the NSF I-Corps program, which started a decade ago, to grow the societal and economic benefits arising from federally funded research in science and engineering.

Located in the heart of the U.S. Northeast, the new hub will make use of its proximity to “deep-tech industries” that revolve around fundamental discoveries in areas such as health care and pharmaceuticals, energy, the environment, earth and water-friendly “green and blue” technologies, financial technologies, agriculture, communications and digital information.

“The hub will build on the robust industrial and governmental relationships of its academic institutions to develop a network of cross-sector partnerships that will leverage the investment of federal research dollars in the region’s universities.”

“The Federal support for innovation provides a dynamic infusion of resources to energize economic growth, grow employment opportunities, and inspire new generations of entrepreneurial researchers to find solutions to societal challenges,” said U.S. Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman, who represents New Jersey’s 12th district, which includes Princeton University. “New Jersey’s institutes of higher learning have always been on the cutting edge. The National Science Foundation’s I-Corps Northeast Hub will invigorate the capacity for federally funded research to improve people’s everyday lives.”

For more information, visit icorpsnortheasthub.org.

Princeton welcomes diverse cohorts of new students

It’s not unusual to walk down Nassau Street across from the Princeton campus and overhear several languages being spoken. The diversity of Princeton University students, faculty and staff is a contributing factor.

First-year students in the Class of 2025 who arrived for the fall semester come from all 50 states — plus Washington, D.C., Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands — and 58 other countries. The 1,345 members of the first-year class include more than 200 students who deferred enrollment from the Classes of 2023 and 2024. Eighteen percent are first-generation college students, 22% are lower-income students eligible for federal Pell grants and 62% qualify for financial aid.

Forty-eight percent of the incoming students are U.S. citizens or permanent residents who self-identify as people of color, including biracial and multiracial students. Thirteen percent of the class are international citizens. Some countries represented in the Class of 2025 include Albania, China, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, the Netherlands and Rwanda.

Additionally, during orientation the University welcomed 713 graduate students from 54 countries for the 2023-22 academic year.

The Graduate School again admitted and yielded its most diverse cohort of students, with 24% of incoming domestic students (including terminal master’s and Ph.D. students) from underrepresented groups. Incoming underrepresented domestic Ph.D. students will comprise 23% of the domestic Ph.D. population — a historic high.

The University has teamed up with local businesses for mutual benefit with the Tigers in Town program, which encourages students to support local merchants as they explore Princeton on Nassau Street and beyond.

In the town-gown partnership, local shops and restaurants provide students with free items and meals and help student groups with planning social events at off-campus businesses.

The program began in March, a joint project of the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students and the Undergraduate Student Government to help small businesses recover from business declines brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic.

“Students and business owners who participated in the program shared overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding community engagement and the fostering of new connections,” said Iain Deas, dean of assistant dean of undergraduate students and director of student leadership engagement. “We are excited to build upon the success of the program and expand the scope of the program to include local businesses beyond walking distance to Princeton’s campus.”

New director of athletics announced

John Mack, a member of the Princeton Class of 2000, is the University’s new Ford Family Director of Athletics. Mack worked as an athletics administrator at Princeton and as the Big Ten Conference and at Northwestern University. He most recently was a lawyer practicing in Michigan. He succeeds Mollie Marcoux Samaan, Class of 1991, who became commissioner of the Ladies Professional Golf Association. The full announcement on Mack’s appointment is available at goprincetontigers.com.

Community Connections

Princeton University’s Office of Community and Regional Affairs is pleased to send this publication to our neighbors with information about the many ways the University and the local community intersect. Questions? Email us at prcra@princeton.edu or call 609-258-3204.
Solar arrays expand on campus and beyond for sustainability

New University solar projects represent a big leap forward in sustainability. Princeton is expanding its renewable energy generation on campus by installing eight new solar projects. The expansion supports the University’s ambitious goal to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2046.

The solar arrays will be connected to the Princeton microgrid and will more than triple the University’s current solar photovoltaic (PV) generating capacity from about 5.5% to 19% of current electricity use. The new solar arrays will be partially or fully powered from renewable resources. Investing in heat pumps and geo-exchange projects, with enough capacity to serve the entire campus, will enable Princeton University to phase out nonrenewable energy sources, including natural gas used today to produce steam heat and power.

The new solar PV arrays will be built above three large parking decks, one surface parking lot, three fields and the roof of the High-Performance Computing Research Center (HPCRC) on the Forrestal campus in Plainsboro. The field mounted solar arrays will be installed in “bifacial” solar modules that can collect energy on both sides of the solar cells, thereby increasing their efficiency and energy yield. The new panels can approach 25% efficiency, compared with those installed in 2012 that were 20% efficient. The new solar arrays are being built under a power purchase agreement with EDF Renewables. The company will design, build, own, operate, and maintain the arrays for 15 years. After that, the University will have the option to purchase the facilities. The expectation is that these solar facilities will continue to function for another 10 to 15 years after that.

As Princeton expands the use of geo-exchange technology on campus, the electric heat pumps in the new TIGER (Thermally Integrated Geo-Exchange Resource) facility will be partially or fully powered from renewable resources, investing in heat pumps and geo-exchange projects, with enough capacity to serve the entire campus, will enable Princeton University to phase out nonrenewable energy sources, including natural gas used today to produce steam heat and power.

Lot 23 on the south corner of the Princeton University campus. Photo by Dan Day.

Into podcasts? Give a listen to these Princeton productions

- **A.I. Nation** from the Center for Information Technology Policy and Philadelphia Public Radio Station WHYY-FM explores artificial intelligence and its implications for our everyday lives. The podcast features Ed Felten, emeritus professor of computer science, and WHYY host Malcolm Burnley. A.I. Nation is available wherever you get your podcasts, or at this link: cipt.p.rinceton.edu/a-nation-podcast.

- **African American Studies Podcast** acts as a conversation around the field of African American Studies and the black experience in the 21st century. The podcast focuses on the political, economic, and cultural forces that shape our understanding of race within America. We invite you to listen as we explore outcomes, question dominant discourse, and consider evidence instead of myths. Find out more at aas.princeton.edu.

- **All for Earth** delves into the urgency of today’s environmental crises through in-depth interviews with the people racing time to prevent the implosion of the critical and interconnected systems that support life on Earth, including climate, biodiversity, water security, and food production. Guests represent the worlds of science and technology; politics and government; finance and business; health, media, sports and more. Find out more at allforearth.princeton.edu.

- **Let’s Talk About...** a presentation from the Pace Center for Civic Engagement, offers a series of virtual conversations and podcast interviews with Princeton University faculty and community partners about the intersections between their work and COVID. Find out more at pace.princeton.edu.

- **Madison's Notes**, the official podcast of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, is now available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, and Podbean. The podcast features lectures by and conversations with leading scholars and public figures on topics related to politics, philosophy, religion, history, and more at madisonnotes.podcast.

- **Politics & Polls** unpacks the history or politics and current events in the U.S. Hosted by Julian Zelizer and Sam Wang, the show features some of the best minds in politics, journalism, academia, and even the arts. The result is a respectful, intellectual - and oftentimes fun debate and discussion. Find our more at politicspolls.princeton.edu.

- **Princeton Tigers**, the official podcast of channel of Princeton University Athletics, offers a range of shows from varsity coaches. Find out more at princetonathletics.podbean.com.

- **We Roar**, Princeton University’s podcast series, focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. Episodes feature COVID-19 research and innovative solutions, the disease’s impact on society, and the ways in which the University is adapting to disruptions to its academic program and campus life. Find out more at weroar.princeton.edu.