

November Updates from the Acting Provost – November 6, 2023

Dear Members of the Sewanee Community,

It has been a busy fall, and I write to provide you with an update on some of the many activities and developments across campus.

Strategic Planning: In order to position the University for continued success in the coming decades, Vice-Chancellor Pearigen and I have begun work with the University's Strategic Planning Committee to launch a new strategic planning process. The planning process is very much in the early stages, but we have already begun work on a framework for the plan, which is organized around the following three pillars:

- A renewed curriculum for the 21st century.
- The Domain as laboratory, playground, sanctuary, and home
- Preparing students for citizenship, leadership, and lives of meaning and significance.

Underneath these three pillars, the Strategic Planning Committee has tentatively discussed some potential objectives and initiatives. The intent is to have the plan touch all of us at the University, including both the School of Theology and the College, and in the community. The strategic plan will build upon the studies and some of the recommendations that were included in the Foundation Report produced last academic year. The draft framework for the strategic plan is attached to this email.

In order to provide opportunities for members of the University to learn about, and contribute to, the strategic plan, the Strategic Planning Committee will host a number of fora for various constituencies to join. We hope that faculty, staff, students, and trustees and regents will attend strategic planning sessions to learn about one another's perspectives on the University and how we can work together to advance the success of the University. You will be hearing more about those sessions in the future.

Homecoming: Homecoming and Reunion Weekend welcomed 1,349 graduates of the College back to the Mountain for class reunions and numerous events on campus. In addition to many sports events and gatherings hosted by departments, the weekend included the unveiling of the portrait of English Professor Emerita Pamela Royston Macfie. At a standing-room-only event in Convocation Hall, Vice-Chancellor Pearigen accepted the portrait of Macfie on behalf of the University. Another highlight of the weekend was the conferring of awards by the Associated Alumni. Alden Knowlton, C'08, and Joe Brew, C'08, were named Outstanding Young Alumni, Norman Jetmundson, C'76, and David Crews, C'76 were honored for their work on the film *Sewanee 1899—Unrivaled*, a documentary about the legendary football team of 1899. The Associated Alumni honored Paige Schneider, teaching professor emerita of the Politics Department and Eric Benjamin, C'73, former director of multicultural affairs for their outstanding contributions as faculty and staff members. The occasion offered an opportunity to honor the work and memory of Benjamin, who passed away this spring, on what should have been his 50th reunion weekend. Finally, Linda Mayes, C'73, was given the Distinguished Alumnus Award for her work in the field of psychology at the Yale Child Study Center, where she conducts research and teaches. Mayes contributes in many ways to the University, including hosting Sewanee students at the Yale Child Study Center in the Yale School of Medicine and collaborating with colleagues on courses at Sewanee.

Thank you to the many offices that work with the Division of University Relations, which brought Homecoming Weekend (and the many campus-wide events this semester) to fruition.

Athletic News: Sewanee sports teams have enjoyed many successes this fall. In particular, the women's volleyball team, men's golf team, men's soccer team, and the equestrian teams have all had outstanding seasons. The women's soccer team, however, has enjoyed a triumphant fall. Over Homecoming Weekend, the team won the SAA women's soccer championship with an overtime victory over Rhodes. Earlier in the month, junior Brianna Fee was named Offensive Player of the Year in the SAA, and Head Coach Greg Cathell was named SAA Coach of the Year. Thanks to our many student-athletes in all of our sports for their commitment to representing Sewanee.

Public Safety: In the last month, the Sewanee Police Department has been extremely busy. In addition to providing security at numerous public events, they have twice been called on to address two serious incidents on campus. In October, the police had to respond to a disturbance at Gorgas Hall, which resulted in pursuit of the suspects by car and then on foot. On Nov. 4, the police arrested a suspect attempting to break into Trezevant Hall and who claimed to have planted a bomb in the building. The police evacuated and searched the building, finding no evidence of any bomb.

In a secure community such as Sewanee, we sometimes take the professionalism of our police force for granted. The last month highlighted the importance of their training and preparedness to keep our community safe.

Biehl Commons: Construction work on the Biehl Commons is complete, and an inspection of the recently installed elevator is scheduled for later this week. Pending a successful inspection, the University plans a "soft opening" in the coming weeks. At that point, the Biehl Commons will be open for use, but plans for dining services will be delayed until Sewanee Dining can adequately prepare to offer its services.

Homecoming Musings: Homecoming is a great time to reconnect with former students and their families. Having moved into administration more than six years ago, it is also an opportunity to see trustees, regents, and donors to the University, some of whom I have only met on Zoom since 2020. Over the weekend, I had the privilege of meeting some of the donors who are providing support to financially challenged students who wish to study abroad. One donor who I met in person for the first time has provided funds to meet the logistical expenses associated with study abroad—airfares, visas, and vaccinations—that can make a difference between a student being able to study abroad or not. The donor has been motivated by his inability to study abroad because of financial barriers when he was an undergraduate. This is just one example of the many ways that our alumni are providing enhanced educational opportunities for our current students beyond what they enjoyed.

Best wishes,
Scott

Three Pillars of a Framework for Strategic Planning (Draft 2023.11.02)

1. A Renewed Curriculum for the 21st Century

- a. Create a universal first-year experience/first-year program (FYE/FYP)
- b. Expand the data science curricula
- c. Develop the School of Theology curriculum and program offerings
- d. Expand engaged learning (high-impact practices and experiential learning) and certificate programs
- e. Expand and promote business offerings
- f. Enhance the environmental curricula and programming

2. The Domain as laboratory, playground, sanctuary and home

- a. Develop the Sewanee Environmental Institute
- b. Ensure sustainable management of the Outer Domain
- c. Promote sustainable economic development of the Village and Inner Domain
- d. Expand opportunities for attractive and affordable home ownership on the Domain
- e. Support community development in the region
- f. Facilitate recreational opportunities for the Sewanee community and visitors

3. Preparing students for citizenship, leadership and lives of meaning and significance

- a. Enhance leadership co-curricular programming and curricula
- b. Expand advising and engaged learning opportunities on and off the Domain
- c. Establish Sewanee as a model of social and environmental justice, civic engagement and community involvement
 - i. Build upon the progress of the Office of DEI, TRHT, the Roberson Progress and Indigenous communities initiatives
 - ii. Reinforce Sewanee's Climate Accountability Plan
 - iii. Promote spiritual reflection on sustainable practices and sense of place and purpose
- d. Enhance athletics and its capacity to promote student success and leadership
- e. Enhance the holistic health and well-being of the University community