

January Newsletter – January 8, 2024

Dear Members of the University Community,

I hope that you enjoyed a joyous and refreshing holiday season. Although classes will not begin for another week, activities are already beginning to enliven the campus. Below are updates on just some of the upcoming events and developments on campus.

MLK Day of Service: Jan. 15 marks the second year that the campus community is invited to join a day of service to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day. As many of you know, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. visited the nearby [Highlander Folk School](#) in Tracy City, which was an important organizational site during the Civil Rights Movement and beyond, so MLK Day is of national and local importance. Events that day begin at 9 a.m. with a community brunch at the Fowler Center, which will be followed at 10:30 by an opportunity to help build beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a national service organization. The beds will be provided to people in the region who otherwise would not have a bed to sleep on. Participants who are not inclined to build beds may still contribute by making blankets and cards at the same venue. The events will conclude with a special service in All Saints' Chapel at 5 p.m. Students will not have classes on Jan. 15, and employees are given a floating holiday to join the events. All are encouraged to join the activities and mark this important day in our national and community calendar.

Convening on Racial History and Repair: The University of the South and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund will jointly convene discussions on the theme "[Catalyzing Change: Frameworks for Repairing Histories of Racial Inequity](#)" on our campus. The convening, which will be held Jan. 9-11, will bring together representatives from dozens of institutions and organizations of higher education to engage in discussions on how institutions grapple with and present their histories of racial inequity and how to repair relations with affected communities. The gathering includes presentations and conversations related to how institutions and foundations can contribute to changing the narratives on racial inequity through repairing race relations. The convening will include a conversation between Vice-Chancellor Rob Pearigen and Mari Kuraishi, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. The University's co-sponsoring of the gathering signals the important leadership role that Sewanee is playing in conversations about race and reconciliation in higher education.

100 Years of Basketball: The University will mark 100 years of Sewanee basketball with a series of events to be held Jan. 19-21. The weekend will include men's and women's basketball games against Rhodes and Hendrix, an alumni game, and a banquet to celebrate basketball at Sewanee. The games will be played on a newly installed wood floor in Juhan Gymnasium, and fans can enjoy the games from new seating.

Easter Semester Opening Convocation and the Opening of Biehl Commons: The University will hold its Opening Convocation for the Easter term on Jan. 19, 4:30 p.m. in All Saints' Chapel. In addition to conferring gowns on students, Professor Stephanie McCarter of the Classics Department will offer an address at the convocation. Professor McCarter's feminist translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Penguin Books, 2022) has received a number of awards and contributed to a reframing of classical works. Then on Jan. 20, from noon to 2 p.m., the

Biehl Commons will formally open for business. Guests are welcome to enjoy live music provided by the Kash Wright Trio in Biehl Commons.

Beyond the Gates (20 Years!): On Jan. 12-13, the University will host its 20th offering of Beyond the Gates, a program that brings Sewanee alumni back to campus to help current students prepare for launching their careers after Sewanee. The two-day event will help students learn how to present a professional persona in interviews and social events among other “soft skills” necessary to find jobs. Beyond the Gates is an important occasion for alumni to give back to the University by connecting with and advising current students.

Strategic Planning: The University is launching a strategic planning process, which will focus on the following three pillars:

- Mind: A Renewed Curriculum for the 21st Century.
- Heart: Preparing Students for Citizenship, Leadership, and Lives of Meaning and Significance.
- Place: The Domain as Laboratory, Recreation Site, Sanctuary, and Home.

As announced in my December emails, students, faculty, and staff are invited to attend focus group conversations and open forums in January and February to help shape the contents of the plan. We are especially interested in initiatives that fall under the pillars and that will advance the institution’s development in the coming decade. The focus group conversations and open forums will be facilitated by Dawn Wiese, former vice president for student affairs at Washington and Lee University. In the coming weeks, we will send additional messages on how to sign up to participate in the focus groups. Please sign up to join these conversations at an important point in the life of our University.

Career Readiness and Student Success: Beginning this month, the team that has been known as Integrated Advising and Career Readiness, located in the Center for Student Success and Flourishing, will be rebranded simply as Career Readiness and Student Success (both the team/department and their physical location in Carnegie). This new name will now reflect all aspects of the team’s work. The “career readiness” portion of the name covers all of the work the team does to support students as they focus on exploring their future careers and building lives of meaning and purpose; the “student success” portion covers all that they do with academic support, collaboration with faculty for advising, classroom workshops, ensuring and increasing equity, mentoring programs, success coaching, supporting students through the CARE Team process, and managing the process for students’ withdrawals and re-entries for reasons other than academic suspensions.

For now, that is all the news that is fit to print.

Sincerely,
Scott