

April 22

Dear Colleagues,

The Emergency Management Executive Team made progress last week on several important items. By now you are aware that we have canceled all on-campus summer programs. We won't be inviting anyone to campus until after at least July 31, although we are making plans for those few students who may need to remain on campus for the summer.

- The programs that can function remotely will still move forward in both the School of Theology and the College. Further information on summer programs can be found on the University's COVID-19 website.
- While Gov. Lee has announced that the stay-at-home order for Tennessee will expire on April 30, we plan to maintain our current status with regard to summer programs and will monitor Tennessee's progress closely.

The decision about summer programs has allowed us to focus most of our attention on planning for the fall. While the EMET will continue to meet twice per week, I have assembled an Operational Planning team. This team will use the scenarios and assumptions provided by the Financial Scenario Group to create action plans that safeguard lives in our communities and to ensure the operational continuity of the University.

- Similar to our Strategic Enrollment Planning process, the planning group will be made up of the leaders of a number of working teams on College and School of Theology academics, undergraduate recruitment and marketing, continuing student support and retention, information technology infrastructure, and environmental health and safety.
- These teams will include staff, faculty, and students as appropriate.

The fall operational team will meet weekly to ensure their work is integrated across divisions and offices. As you are now aware, our vice-chancellor-elect will start his tenure in mid-June. He is being kept up to date on our planning and is weighing in when and where appropriate.

- We are paying attention to several indicators of student engagement for the fall, including keeping an eye on course registration this week.
- While registration has been an online process for quite some time, advising usually happens face-to-face. Faculty have been working their advising Zoom meetings into their already packed schedules.
- Registration is scheduled to end on Thursday night this week. After the first two days, response looks strong with 1,228 continuing students registering for classes. This is in line with expectations of a normal year.
- In addition to registration, returning students will engage in room draw next week.
 - Both of these processes are being rolled out with the confidence that we will provide a full complement of programming to support our educational mission on the one hand, and in the hope that we can all be together on campus in the fall on the other.
 - Of course, the latter cannot be determined at this time, which is why we are planning ahead for a variety of scenarios.

- Another indicator we watch every year at this time is undergraduate admissions. We are keeping track of deposits and comparing them year-to-date with the number of deposits from past years. As of April 21, we stand at 436 undergraduate deposits, which is 86 ahead of last year. Both registration response and new student deposits are positive signs for the fall.

Our operational planning for the fall has three main objectives.

- First, our primary concern is the health and well-being of the entire Sewanee community. The University will continue to operate in compliance with state and federal health guidance. That means, when appropriate, we will be ready with operational policies and health protocols that allow us to resume face-to-face instruction as safely as possible.
- Our second objective is to determine how to deliver the authentic Sewanee experience as safely and effectively as possible. Scenarios under consideration include welcoming students back to campus in the fall. However, contingency plans are being developed that include continuing to offer courses remotely, moving the start of the semester later in the year, and making adjustments to the semester structure. We will preserve the Sewanee experience whether delivered remotely or on campus with appropriate distancing.
- Our third priority is effectively recruiting the next undergraduate class (fall 2021) using only remote techniques. Our admissions office is already implementing creative strategies given that travel bans and distancing are in effect. They will continue to innovate as the national situation progresses.

From My Perspective

I've always loved the quiet times in Sewanee when the town empties out for a few weeks at the end of May and again at the beginning of August. The pace slows down and I can wear jeans to the office. Other times, the campus is bustling with activity and it is almost impossible to keep up with the emails between meetings and activities. But right now it is this crazy combination of the two. Campus has emptied and is quiet, and I am dressing casually at work, but the pace is breakneck and the decisions have even more serious consequences. The gorgeous spring weather is also in such stark contrast to the world health situation. The juxtaposition of these opposing realities was at first unsettling. But it is exactly the quiet beauty, the ability to go out the front door for a long hike to a quiet lake, the trees and flowers blooming—nature going on as usual—that keeps me grounded. It is a blessing to be in Sewanee during this time. I hope you find that to be true as well and are finding some time to enjoy it.

I hope this communication finds you and yours well. Keep up the social distancing.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost