

June 23, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

You've probably noticed the dramatic increase in the number of people on campus in recent days. Summer is clearly underway! Last weekend saw the arrival of participants in the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, the Sewanee Environmental Institute, and session I of the Sewanee Summer Seminar, while tennis camps are ongoing. Later in July, we'll see the arrival of participants in the Sewanee Writers' Conference and SUMMA, the pre-college theological debate camp.

I hope by now you are all aware that if you plan to have student interns, students, or program participants on campus this summer and have not already done so, you need to contact Conference Services (conferences@sewanee.edu) to make arrangements. You'll need to outline your COVID-19 mitigation plans.

Planning

As you know, last year an important element of our COVID-19 containment strategy was regular testing of students and employees. For the coming academic year, the University's strategy will rely largely on vaccinations. The vaccines currently available in the United States are safe and effective, reducing the risk of serious illness by up to 95%, and we strongly encourage everyone to be vaccinated. Achieving significant levels of vaccination on campus, especially among our students, will allow for a less stressful and more successful academic year.

For the fall semester, Sewanee will not require students or employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19. However, students who have not been vaccinated will be tested weekly for COVID-19. We will let students know the details of the plan in a message to them this week. Regular surveillance testing will not be required for employees. However, employees who cannot be vaccinated and would like to participate in weekly testing may do so at no cost.

Facilities Openings

All areas of the **Fowler Center** are open, including locker rooms. Patrons are encouraged to wear masks inside the Fowler Center. [Summer hours](#) are posted.

duPont Library has hours posted on its [website](#). The library is open to employees, students, and community members.

McClurg Dining Hall is now open for inside dining to faculty, staff, students of the College and School of Theology, and summer program attendees. It is not open at this time to other community members or family members of employees. Only credit cards will be accepted as payment. McClurg staff will continue to wear masks and they ask that you do, too, until you are seated and eating.

Masking on Campus

Masks are no longer required outdoors, unless otherwise indicated. Masking may be required for indoor events or gatherings where the vaccination status of attendees is not known. Some University facilities where people gather, such as Fowler and McClurg, request that masks be worn inside. Because the threat of COVID-19 infection is still present, though certainly diminished, individuals should continue to take the precautions that make them most comfortable. CDC guidance states, “If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated.” The University’s masking directive may be adjusted again if conditions change.

COVID-19 Testing

The Public Health Office will be happy to provide testing services if you are feeling symptomatic with possible COVID-19, or need documentation of a negative test to travel. In either case, please email publichealth@sewanee.edu to coordinate. Employees who receive positive test results must work with their primary care providers to determine how to proceed and must follow University policies related to COVID-19 and sick leave.

Other University News

Open Staff Meetings: The Board of Regents met in person last week. Details of actions taken by the Board will be outlined by the vice-chancellor at the upcoming Open Staff meetings (June 30, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. in Convocation Hall). You have already received the good news that our retirement benefits will be fully restored starting July 1. Please send any questions or issues you would like to have addressed to Employee Advisory Committee Representative [Tammy Elliott](#) or Human Resources Representative [Jessica Welch](#) by June 28. You can send your questions either through the SPO or to either representative by email. On the recommendation of the EAC, we ask that all questions include the name of the submitter (no anonymous submissions). Faculty members will receive their regular report in the coming weeks. In addition, faculty and staff will receive a written summary of the Board’s actions.

CDO Search Completed: As you may have seen, the University recently [hired its first chief diversity officer](#). Dr. Sibby Anderson-Thompkins comes to us from UNC-Chapel Hill, where she has served in a variety of roles since 2007, most recently as interim chief diversity officer. Prior to serving at UNC, she served Agnes Scott College as director of academic advising, and Hampshire College in the division of student affairs. Sibby is a strong collaborator and consensus builder, characteristics that will be important as she helps bring our considerable efforts into focus. Sibby begins her work with us remotely on Aug.16 and will arrive on campus Sept. 13.

From My Perspective

I appreciate not needing to wear a mask and being able to see everyone’s faces again. But I have to admit that at times it makes me nervous to be in an unmasked group, even when I know that everyone I am around is also vaccinated. For instance, the Regents were in town last week. We had dinners and meetings without masks or distancing, and at first I found it a bit shocking

because it was a rather large group. When we greeted each other with handshakes, I wanted to look around for the hand sanitizer. Perhaps ironically, it doesn't bother me to go into a store unmasked where I can't be sure of anyone else's vaccination status, but in that situation I have more control over distancing myself from others. I'm not saying it's logical. I'm just realizing that while we've been longing for this time for a year, it is going to take a while to feel normal while acting normally. It's funny how we can so quickly get used to something new while at the same time we push back so hard on change, even when it is the change we wanted.

Sincerely,

Nancy