

January 26, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you all. Scott and I appreciate your supportive messages as we settle into our [new roles](#). As previously mentioned, we will continue to focus on the University's goals through our strategic planning process (see below), and our changed duties will not cause day-to-day operations to change.

COVID-19 Updates

Testing: Employees who have been exposed to persons known to have COVID-19 can now [sign up here](#) for a time slot to get a COVID-19 test at the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostics Lab (SMDL). These tests will be covered by your insurance. Employees who need a negative test in order to travel may also sign up for a test at the SMDL. However, we cannot charge insurance companies for surveillance (travel) testing, so employees testing for this purpose will need to pay SMDL directly for these tests. (The cost is \$65.) Employees who are experiencing symptoms should see their healthcare provider, who can then order a COVID test that can be processed by the SMDL. These tests will also be covered by insurance. Please see the [FAQ regarding employee testing](#) for more details.

You can see our testing results on our [dashboard](#). During the first week of classes we had a total of 43 positive COVID-19 tests. These included positive rapid antigen tests reported to us by students and PCR tests performed by the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory. The number of positive tests decreased last week to 19. As a reminder with regard to the rapid antigen tests, we know only how many tests were *distributed*, and how many students *reported positive tests to us*. Thus, we have separated these data from the usual PCR testing data that you are used to seeing and that we will continue to update.

University Health Service continues to provide COVID-19 testing for symptomatic students and students who have been a close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19. As in the fall, students who test positive after arrival will be advised to isolate in place if they cannot return home; we are offering KN95 masks to students isolating in their rooms and to their roommates.

Boosters: The University strongly encourages all eligible students, faculty, and staff to receive a COVID-19 vaccination booster shot as soon as possible. Booster shots prove effective against the omicron and delta variants; boosters also reduce the severity of COVID-19 among those infected. In addition, the CDC has [announced that those who have received boosters do not need to quarantine](#) after an exposure to COVID-19. You are encouraged to voluntarily report your booster record in [our database](#). This is a HIPAA-compliant survey that requires the date you completed your vaccination series, Banner ID, and a photo of your CDC-issued vaccination record card.

Masks: The [University's masking policy](#) remains in effect this semester. It can be hard to stick with masking. We are all getting pretty tired of it, but we need to continue in order to slow the

spread of the virus on campus, so please wear your mask indoors. You are encouraged to remind anyone not complying with our indoor masking policy to please do so. Please be gracious in reminding, and when you are reminded!

We have stocked up on [KN95 masks](#). Some studies have shown these medical-grade masks to be more effective than cloth face coverings in preventing the spread of COVID-19, especially the omicron variant. Employees who would like a supply of masks or other personal protective equipment (PPE) for work should contact the Purchasing Office (purchasing@sewanee.edu). The Purchasing Office will place orders for additional required PPE not in stock so that the University can obtain discounts and lower prices.

News from the Cabinet:

Strategic planning: The Strategic Planning Committee and its four subcommittees on diversity, equity, and inclusion; curriculum renewal and innovation; student success; and economic development and Domain optimization continue their work with a slightly longer timeline. The revised schedule calls on the committee to complete its plan this September and seek endorsement from the Board of Trustees in early October. The longer time frame allows the subcommittees to collect more data for their analyses in order to write a well-informed strategic plan. To that end, the Strategic Planning Committee will send all students, faculty, and staff a survey to collect their views on various issues related to the use of the Domain, community development and inclusivity, student success, and Sewanee educational experiences. Responses will all be kept anonymous, and we strongly encourage you to share your views. Look for an email in the next two weeks that will offer the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Contingency planning: As I mentioned earlier this month, the Cabinet engaged in contingency planning in case we have significant numbers of employees away from work due to COVID-19 infections or exposures. Last week, Cabinet members provided their written plans. I appreciated that Cabinet members engaged many of you in the contingency planning process for your specific functional areas. I was impressed with the level of detail provided, and with how much cross-training has occurred. I am grateful for the time you all took to fill out the planning templates, and for the time, thought, and dedication you have provided throughout the pandemic to keep us operational and able to offer an on-campus education experience for our students.

Sincerely,

Nancy