

April 29, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As you are likely aware, the [Tennessee Pledge](#), Gov. Lee's plan to help residents return to work in a safe environment and to help reboot our state's economy goes into effect on April 30. The plan recommends safety protocols based on CDC and OSHA guidelines. One guideline includes allowing employees to work from home as much as possible—something that the University has already put in place. At this point, we ask that employees maintain their current status until further notice. The Emergency Management Executive Team will continue to monitor cases in Tennessee and surrounding counties and make any adjustments to this policy going forward.

The Sewanee Fall Operational Group (Sewanee FOG) has begun its work. Planning is being done based on several potential scenarios for this fall while also keeping in mind longer-term impacts. We not only need to get through the pandemic—although that is certainly the most immediate concern and is capturing most of our attention—but we also need to position ourselves for the demographic realities of 2026. Therefore, FOG planning is being integrated with ongoing strategic enrollment planning to inform our operational thinking. We will reflect on the kind of institution we want to build as we go forward.

The FOG is meeting weekly. Their operational work will be integrated in fairly short order to provide the Board of Regents with the confidence that we have planned appropriately for the most likely situations and that we are ready. Very quickly these groups will need to hone in on the fall, and your ideas are welcome! Contact any of these team leaders to provide your thoughts:

- College Academic Planning (including calendar) - Terry Papillon
- School of Theology Academic Planning - Neil Alexander
- Undergraduate Yield and Recruitment - Lee Ann Backlund
- Environmental Health and Safety - Eric Hartman
- Student Support / Student Life - Marichal Gentry
- Student Retention / Student Activities - Lauren Goodpaster
- Information Technology - Vicki Sells

As I mentioned last week, we are keeping our eyes on a number of student engagement indicators this spring to help predict enrollment and retention for next fall. We have established a dashboard that is updated on a daily or weekly basis, depending upon the data.

- Registration for fall classes took place last week. At the end of the four days of registration, a total of 1,237 students had registered for at least one course, and 1,200 have at least 12 hours (three courses), a full course load. This is in line with normal expectations.

- Room draw started on Monday night (April 27) and 458 students participated, which included proctors and theme house residents. The process will continue through this week, and participation for the first night was typical of previous years.
- Undergraduate admission deposits continue to be very strong. As of April 28, we have received 477 deposits, which is 79 ahead of last year. For comparison, last year we peaked at 451 deposits on May 8, so we have already surpassed last year's high. Registration, room draw and undergraduate admission indicators are all strong at this time.
- We are also monitoring indicators such as applications for deferral by first-year students in order to take a gap year, leave of absence applications by current students, suspensions, reinstatements, and withdrawals. These indicators develop over time but are currently in line with prior years.

From My Perspective

I am confident that our planning process will provide the integrated operational and financial results we need. As many of you know, I'm a biologist by training, and my field of focus in biology is physiology. Physiology is the study of how organs, organ systems, cells, and molecules interact to carry out the normal functioning of an organism. Lack of integration between organs throws off the whole organism's smooth functioning. (For example, try running without increasing your respiratory rate.) Bringing this integrative way of thinking into our administrative responsibilities, we work with cross-functional teams to approach problems from different perspectives while keeping our goals squarely in focus. In many ways, the planning we are doing now is systems-level physiology.

Thank you to all of you who respond to my communications with such kindness and support. I cannot respond to all of the emails that I get in response, but please know that I read and treasure them all. It is a privilege to serve this very generous and compassionate community.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner,

Provost