

February 10, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Planning

The cold and snow have resulted in some classes being moved inside or online temporarily. Fortunately, the registrar and IT had the foresight to outfit additional large indoor spaces for classes. The snow is pretty, but wet, heavy snow in particular poses some safety hazards related to the tents. I'm grateful that our faculty and students are being flexible as we make our way through the winter weather.

Summer planning is going slowly but should pick up soon. I've found that one key to effective planning is to identify the question that must be answered first, after which the answers to other questions more or less fall into place. I thought for our summer planning that question was about the amount of space needed for programs, but it really is the mode of teaching for Summer School. The registrar is gathering data from faculty. Once we have a clear plan for Summer School, I think we'll be able to start answering questions about other programs. Of course, each program has its own peculiar needs, so we'll still have to take them one at a time.

Testing

As mentioned last week, the COVID-19 positivity rate of our onboarding testing for students was spectacularly low (0.42%), and was topped only by our first week of surveillance testing with a positivity rate of only 0.11%. There were two positives (one student and one employee) out of 1,840 tests. Of course, each week starts a new round of testing. We have not strained our quarantine resources, and we are prepared to increase student surveillance testing as needed to help ensure that we continue as virus-free as possible. See the University's testing results published each morning on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Don't forget that the 3W's remain our most powerful tool to combat the spread of this disease: [Wear your mask](#). Wash your hands. Watch your distance. It's important to follow good [COVID-19 protocols](#) both on campus *and off campus*, and [to continue to limit your social interactions](#).

We'll test approximately 250 employees each week going forward. As surveillance testing continues, I want to remind everyone that results will be available the next day, and you will receive a communication only if the results are positive. Remember that employees who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and who are working on campus may request to be tested by our team by calling 931.598.1010 (please do not show up at the Fowler test site unannounced). 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.

Athletics

On-campus games have been scheduled this spring for several fall and winter sports (including men's basketball competition last weekend), and we hope the same will be possible for at least some spring sports. See our COVID-19 protocols for these competitions in this [FAQ](#).

It has been decided that our spring sports teams (baseball, equestrian, golf, lacrosse, softball, tennis, and track & field) will compete under the same guidelines that were set forth for fall and winter sports. Sewanee's athletic teams will not travel off the Domain for competition this semester. In conversations with numerous stakeholders, the importance of athletics in the lives of our student-athletes and community was widely affirmed; however, there were deep concerns about the return to full athletic competition with regular travel, and the impact that outside travel would have on our ability to protect the bubble and continue an on-campus student experience. Further information can be found on the [Athletics website](#).

Mental Health Resources

Thank you to Dr. Nicole Noffsinger-Frazier for contributing the following: We are midway through the second week of February, which tends to be a difficult month. The winter break is behind us and the pace of our work has intensified. The weather can be cold, dreary, and foggy, and the days often feel long and dark. It's not surprising that mental health challenges tend to increase during the month of February. It's important this month to pay attention to changes you may be experiencing in your own well-being, as well as changes you may notice in your colleagues. Prioritize your self-care, and reach out to your colleagues with kindness to share a thoughtful word or gesture. Seek support when you need to do so. You might consider using a mental health app that all Sewanee students and employees now have *free** access to: [Sanvello](#). Sanvello is one of the highest-rated apps for managing stress, anxiety, and depression. This app can be used by anyone with a [sewanee.edu](#) email account; use your Sewanee email address to set up your Sanvello account. Employees also have access to counseling services through the University's Employee Assistance Program. Details are found on the [Human Resources](#) website.

**Free access is provided with funding from a SAMHSA, Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant.*

Other University News

EQB: Reflection and Response: Please join us via Zoom for conversation about our guiding principles in response to Vice-Chancellor Brigety's remarks Sunday night at Growing in Grace. Cassie Meyer, director of Dialogue Across Difference Programs, and Elizabeth Wilson, director of the Center for Leadership, will facilitate these initial conversations. Please join us on either Thursday, Feb. 11, from 2 to 3 p.m. *or* Friday, Feb. 12, from 9 to 10 a.m at this [Zoom link](#). You can see the VC's remarks at this [link](#).

The 55 Years of Black Alumni celebration originally planned for last fall will be held virtually during the month of February (Black History Month). For almost a year, a committee of alumni and staff has worked on planning a meaningful series of events to mark this milestone. I hope you've noticed the banners up around campus! See the event information and schedule on the [55 Years website](#). In particular, you are encouraged to participate in two of the events: A Roberson Project presentation, "The Untold Tales: A Conversation on the Historic St. Mark's Community," tomorrow, Feb. 11; and a celebration Thursday, Feb. 25, to honor Eric Benjamin, C'73, who retired last summer.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost