

March 17, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Planning

Our summer planning group has finalized the list of COVID-19 mitigation policy statements for summer programs. Conference Services has provided these policy statements to summer program directors, and programs are in the process of outlining their protocols for meeting our COVID-19 mitigation policies and will submit those for review. I'd like to thank program directors for their patience as we have waded through this process. We anticipate having a pretty full summer here in Sewanee. I'm excited about this clear step in the direction of normalcy.

If you plan to have students or program participants on campus this summer, please contact Conference Services (conferences@sewanee.edu), if you have not already done so, to make arrangements. We need to have one point of contact for each program or office to ensure that you have all the information you need, and that we are able to assess and accommodate your needs.

And yes, this includes individual offices that have employed students for the summer or have student interns, and faculty who have student researchers and interns. Please contact Conference Services. They can guide you through the process, which should not be terribly onerous for this category of summer participant.

COVID-19 Testing

Another 1,898 tests last week and only one person tested positive, an employee. That is a 0.05% positivity rate. Our count restarts each week. So far we have not strained our quarantine and isolation capacity. See the University's testing results published daily on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Thank you for continuing to be mindful of the 3W's, 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](#).

I completed my second surveillance test of the semester yesterday. Surveillance test results are available the day after testing, 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.

Commencements

As you may have seen, the date and general arrangements for College Commencement have been settled. In an email to the Class of 2021, Dean Papillon explained that Commencement will

be at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 22. Due to restrictions on the size of gatherings in All Saints' Chapel, the ceremony will take place outside on the football and lacrosse field. There will be no Baccalaureate service and graduation weekend activities will be limited. Each graduate will be given four tickets for seating on the field. Others may view the service online as it is livestreamed. Guest registration will be required, and CDC guidelines in place at the time will be followed. Masking and social distancing will be required at all events. We are very happy that we are able to have a celebration for the class of 2021. Plans for the College Class of 2020 are still somewhat in the air. We are in the middle of collecting responses from members of C'20 to a survey about their preferences for the date and type of Commencement celebration.

The School of Theology is planning for an outdoor, in-person Commencement for its Class of 2021 at 10 a.m. Sunday, May 16 (specific location yet to be determined). Commencement for T'20 will be held as part of the 2021 DuBose Lectures and Alumni Gathering scheduled for Sept. 28-30.

Summer 2021

As mentioned above, we are planning to have a pretty normal summer as far as summer programs go. The Fourth of July planning committee has started their planning. We are planning Commencement for the School of Theology on May 16 and for the College on May 22. Starting May 20, the Inn will open for guests and leaseholders will be able to offer short-term rentals. The travel limitations that were in place for College students during the school year will be discontinued effective Thursday, May 20. With a few exceptions, graduates and their guests, and most summer program participants will be able to travel freely to and from campus. There will be no COVID-19 testing required for Commencement guests. All summer program participants and staff will be tested upon arrival in Sewanee. For programs lasting longer than seven days, weekly surveillance testing is required. Most University facilities that normally are open to the public will be open during the summer. Check each facility's website for more information, as hours and capacities may be limited.

Vaccination Training for Employees

We have reached a turning point in the pandemic. Several vaccine options have been authorized by the Food and Drug Administration, and are increasingly available to those who need them. County Health Departments, Walmart, Kroger, and several local pharmacies are all options. [If your "phase" in Tennessee is eligible](#), you can make an appointment for a vaccination. (And if you're eager but not yet eligible, some locations will give shots that are left at the end of the day, regardless of eligibility.)

To help answer questions regarding the safety, efficacy, and availability of these vaccines, Sewanee's public health team has developed an online training module covering these topics. All employees have been enrolled in the course via the University's learning management system, Brightspace. To access the course, simply [login to Brightspace](#) (using your Banner credentials), and the training will appear under My Courses as **COVID-19 Vaccination**. Please complete the course by midnight Friday, April 2.

Public Health will hold in-person training for departments with large numbers of employees who do not typically access computers during their work. Contact the University's Public Health Officers at publichealth@sewanee.edu if you have any questions.

Other University News

Leadership Lab: Sewanee is invested in supporting and strengthening faculty and staff who want to lead positive social change. The Center for Leadership is accepting applications for the next cohort of the [Leadership Lab](#), a nine-month leadership development program designed for University staff and faculty. Participants are provided with books, personal coaching, professional assessments, and other resources. The application deadline is *today!*

COVID-Relief Funding: I thought some of you might be interested in how the passage of the various COVID-relief bills have affected the University and our students. With the first bill, the University received \$1,094,094, half of which (\$547,047) we were required to pass directly on to students. This [website](#) provides detailed information. The other half of the funds were incremental to our FY20 bottom line and used to reimburse ourselves for some of the \$2.5 million that we refunded in room and board last spring. We have received an additional \$1.5 million from the second relief bill that was passed in December. We are waiting for clarity from the federal government regarding how these funds are to be used. We know that we need to distribute to students the same amount we distributed in the spring, but it is unclear what those disbursements should be based on. It is also unclear which University expenses can be applied to the remaining funds. And finally, we have been informed that we should receive approximately another \$2 million from the bill passed last week. I anticipate that it will take a while to get clarity on the most recent bill, given that we are still waiting for clarity on the second bill. However, all of this is good news for us and for our students. As you know, we are spending about \$7 million in COVID-related expenses on IT infrastructure, COVID-19 testing, PPE, additional cleaning, etc.

The Washington Post

National education reporter Nick Anderson was on campus recently to talk to students, faculty, and Vice-Chancellor Brigety about recent campus incidents and Sewanee's ongoing efforts to grapple with both its history and current events. [His article is here](#) (the library has an online subscription).

Incident at a Sewanee Athletic Event

I want to acknowledge what is on many of your minds. A few Sewanee students yelled racial epithets at members of the visiting team during an athletic event on Saturday. [Read the vice-chancellor's letter.](#)

Hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and community members gathered in the Quad on Monday for a walk-out protest of recent incidents of racist behavior and in support of students of color. Students and Vice-Chancellor Brigety spoke passionately about personal experiences with racism and urged everyone to call out racist behavior whenever it occurs. In a pouring rain today, hundreds of Sewanee student-athletes and supporters joined a March Against Racism organized by the Student Athlete Advisory Council. I appreciate each of you who has supported our students in these and myriad other ways during this trying time.

Thank You: I want to thank the several people who have been very helpful working through summer program protocols. The two teams that developed and reviewed the policies included Chris Carlson, Mariel Gingrich, Sam McNair, David Shipps, Marquitta Starkey, Doug Williams, and Scott Wilson. There were many others on Chris's team involved, as well as several program directors whose many questions guided our work.

And again, thank you to all the program directors for their patience thus far, and for their continued patience as they work through the necessary logistics. I am grateful for the dedication of all who will make this summer another great Sewanee summer!

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost