

May 5, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

#MakeItToMay

First of all ... *can you believe it?* Today is the last day of classes in the School of Theology, and the College's last day is one week away! We still have finals and commencement services ... but we'll have commencements! What a thing we have accomplished together.

Please take a moment over the next few weeks to thank our students. Our success is really *their* success. We put everything in place and then told them that the rest was up to them. They have given up a lot in the way of a "normal" college experience for their COVID-19 college experience. They are not perfect—but they have been pretty darned close. They have carried us to the finish line. So thank them for the success we have enjoyed together—for doing their part to allow the rest of us to continue to do what we love, and to keep the jobs we need. And for allowing us to #MakeItToMay!

Planning

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. Given the number of protocols that have been submitted, it looks like we'll have a very busy summer!

We are planning for a mostly normal fall semester. Students and faculty should plan to be back on campus and in classrooms and laboratories next semester. We are not planning to have any travel or visitor restrictions in place for the Domain, and we expect to have a full slate of lectures, concerts, social activities, and athletic competitions. At this point, the demonstrated safety of the classroom and the wide availability of vaccines make this a viable and safe assumption. Many of our peer institutions are making similar plans. We hope that all students, faculty, and staff will be vaccinated by the fall, and we will continue to pay close attention to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control.

You may be aware that [many colleges and universities](#) have announced that they will require the vaccine for their on-campus students in the fall, generally with some religious and medical exemptions. We have been asked why we are not making the same requirement of our students. Vaccine requirement is a state-by-state determination, as established by the Constitution and confirmed by the Supreme Court. The other vaccinations that we require are all mandated by the State of Tennessee, with religious and other exceptions.

You may have noticed that the [State of Tennessee](#) is not planning to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations. There are several bills making their way through the Tennessee General Assembly that would do the following: Create a civil cause of action for discrimination based on whether an individual has or has not received a COVID-19 vaccine or has opted not to receive the vaccine; prohibit employers and state and local governments from requiring employees to

receive a COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of maintaining employment; prohibit state and local authorities from forcing, requiring, or coercing an individual to receive a COVID-19 vaccination against their will; and prohibit K-12 schools from forcing, coercing, or requiring students to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. It may be that some of the schools that are requiring the vaccine are in states that look like they will enact a mandate. However, we are already seeing that some of these mandates by other schools are starting to be [challenged legally](#). These challenges will set the legal precedent, at least in those states. Additionally, the vaccines are currently approved only for emergency use. Food and Drug Administration guidance is that a vaccine with EUA (Emergency Use Authorization) status should be voluntary. If the EUA status changes or if states require vaccination for COVID-19 as they do for other diseases, an institution's decision for mandatory vaccination would be supported by law.

All of this said, it is [legal](#) for the University to mandate vaccination, but there are liability ramifications, which we are weighing. This [website](#) provides a pretty comprehensive set of considerations for a mandate. Please rest assured that we are keeping an eye on this situation, and it is a topic of considerable conversation.

Updated Masking Requirement

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [updated public guidance for masking](#) for vaccinated people while outdoors. During the pandemic, the University has aligned campus policies with CDC guidance in many different ways. Taking these new recommendations into account, the University masking policy is now as follows:

- While *outdoors*: Masks are not required, regardless of vaccination status, with the exception of gatherings of more than 200 people.
- While *indoors*: Both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals must wear a mask at all times, unless alone, asleep, eating or drinking, or maintaining proper distance. (This has not changed.)

Updated Vaccination Information

In case you missed it, we've "[Popped the Bubble](#)"! We are confident doing so given our excellent mitigation strategies—the 3W's, limiting travel, and weekly testing—and incredibly low positivity rate for undergraduate students (0.04% with only 7 positive results out of the more than 18,000 tests administered this semester). Limitations regarding student movement on and off campus are lifted, as are gathering limits. Family and friends may visit; however, outside visitors will still not be permitted to go inside residence halls and/or stay overnight on campus. Masking remains important and *required* indoors, even for those who are vaccinated. The 3W's—wearing your mask, watching your distance, and washing your hands—remain among the most effective mitigation techniques. We're still monitoring the number of vaccinated students and employees based on entries into [our database](#). For further information, you can check out [the FAQ](#).

Shots available on campus: The University has been able to arrange for Walgreens to administer [Moderna COVID-19 vaccines](#) on campus. Walgreens has administered about 307 first

and second doses over the past couple of weeks. In addition, University Health Service has resumed offering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to students.

To find other vaccination sites near Sewanee, use vaccinefinder.org. All U.S. residents ages 16 and up are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Remember that the University provides up to three paid hours for work time missed while receiving a COVID-19 vaccination, as well as one paid day off following the final shot to allow recovery time from any symptoms due to an immune response. See details on the [Human Resources website](#).

COVID-19 Testing

Another 1,653 tests were administered last week with no one testing positive, for a 0.00% positivity rate! See the University's testing results published daily on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

There were no employee positive tests again last week—great job! Thank you for continuing to be mindful of the 3W's—along with vaccines, they are our most powerful tools 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](#).

[Fully vaccinated](#) employees are no longer required to participate in COVID-19 testing. They are also no longer required to quarantine in the event of an exposure, as long as they remain asymptomatic. In order to be eligible to discontinue COVID-19 testing, a record of your vaccination must be submitted to Sewanee's public health team via vaccine.sewanee.edu. This HIPAA-compliant survey requires the date you completed your vaccination series, banner ID, and a photo of your CDC-issued vaccination record card. If you have trouble completing the survey or submitting your documentation, please contact philip.loyd@sewanee.edu. Until these requirements are met, we ask that you continue testing as required.

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.

Other University News

Facilities opening:

- duPont Library: Don't be surprised to start seeing community members in selected facilities on campus. The duPont Library is now open to community members. Library staff planned to open to the community after graduation, but since we've popped the bubble, they are accommodating community members inside—masked, of course!
- The Fowler Center will wait to open to community members until Tuesday, June 1. The field house is the backup plan for commencement in case of bad weather, and they need to work out membership renewals for community members.

You can find up-to-date information on facility hours of operation and availability to visitors [here](#).

College Admissions Update: May 1 is the annual national deadline for college admission deposits. Our Admission team worked hard all year while recruiting the new class of students who will enter in the fall, under the unusual circumstances of not being able to travel to high schools and of limiting visitors to campus. But their massive digital and virtual efforts paid off. As of May 1, we had commitments from 481 incoming freshmen for fall 2021, over the target of 460! That number will grow over the course of the next few weeks, and then diminish somewhat with “summer melt” as other institutions go to their wait lists. Regardless, this is a great position to be in at this point in the game, and the Admission team has “operation icebox” in full swing!

Strategic Enrollment Planning Workshops: For the past year, colleagues across the College have engaged in a planning process designed to ensure that Sewanee is able to survive and thrive in the challenging higher education landscape ahead. The impending challenges are varied, from the prolonged health and economic impacts of the pandemic to the previously acknowledged “demographic cliff,” a steep decline in potential first-time, first-year students projected to arrive in 2025-2026. In this very competitive undergraduate enrollment market, the strategic enrollment planning process (SEP) was anchored by the question, *“How will we be able to meet the current and future demands of prospective students and prepare matriculating students for future success, thereby making Sewanee a compelling choice?”*

The process has been led by an SEP Council and working teams composed of members from the faculty and staff with input from students. The issues and responsibilities they reviewed cut across departments and require a broad focus on factors that lead to achieving a high-quality college experience.

We are now inviting you to SEP workshops. These workshops are designed to provide you with an update on the strategic enrollment planning process and to get your input on strategic issues that the University has to address. The first hourlong, virtual workshop will center on campus climate and will take place next Wednesday, May 12, from noon to 1 p.m. If you are interested in attending, [please RSVP here](#). The RSVP form includes additional details. A second workshop on June 3 will focus on equity and student success.

This time last year ...: I thought it might be interesting, now that I’ve been doing this for more than a year, to look back and see what we were working on a year ago. The FOG had just begun its work and was sifting through recommendations from the CDC, OSHA, and other employment and safety organizations as we contemplated how to begin to have more employees return to campus last June. Students were coming back to Sewanee to retrieve their belongings because they did not return at the end of spring break. We had to stage the move-out process in order to maintain distancing and because of travel restrictions in place in some states. And we were closely monitoring admissions, room draw, and other dashboard numbers that would help us understand how many students would participate in the fall. There were predictions of record low enrollments across the country. In the end, our enrollment numbers went up!

Sincerely,

Nancy