

May 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

#MakeItToMay

I am still in awe of our accomplishment. Today is the last day of classes in the College! The School of Theology will hold a commencement service this Sunday at 9 a.m. at Hardee-McGee Field, where 26 seminarians will receive their hoods and diplomas. The College will celebrate its commencement on Saturday, May 22, also at Hardee-McGee Field. Truly amazing!

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 are probably 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. I provided specific detailed information on this topic last week. We are keeping a close eye on this issue as information is changing pretty quickly. I'll update you every few weeks.

Vaccination Information

As this is the last week of College classes, required surveillance testing for students concludes Thursday, May 13. Students will begin departing campus soon, and we are working hard to have as many vaccinated before they leave as possible. This week, students can continue to travel to [numerous locations](#) in the Sewanee area, register to ride in a University van to Decherd, or make an appointment at Sewanee Pediatrics for vaccinations. For further information, you can check out [the FAQ](#).

Even though at this point we are not requiring students or employees to be vaccinated, we strongly encourage you to get your vaccination. The University is dedicated to returning, as much as possible, to the vibrant campus community we enjoyed pre-pandemic, with all the

associated in-person activities. We are also dedicated to the health and safety of the entire community. The vaccines currently authorized by the FDA (Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, and Johnson & Johnson) have been proven both safe and highly effective at preventing COVID-19. To date, more than 250 million vaccine doses have been administered in the U.S.—but we can't stop there. It's important that we all get vaccinated in order to protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

Once you have been vaccinated, please enter your information into [our database](#). Currently we have 365 total records of employee vaccinations. [Fully vaccinated](#) employees (with records submitted) are no longer required to participate in COVID-19 testing, nor to quarantine in the event of an exposure as long as they remain asymptomatic. 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. If you have trouble completing the survey or submitting your documentation, please contact philip.loyd@sewanee.edu. Until you meet these requirements, we ask that you continue testing as required.

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](#).

Updated Masking Requirement

During the pandemic, the University has aligned campus policies with CDC guidance in many different ways, including [updating our public guidance for masking](#). 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.)

I appreciate the adjustments, although it has taken me some time to get used to both seeing people without masks and not wearing one myself.

COVID-19 Testing

Another 1,463 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](#). I'd say that this is getting boring, but I don't want to jinx us!

There were no employee positive tests again last week—great job! It's important to continue to follow good [COVID-19 protocols](#) both on campus *and off campus*, and [to continue to limit your social interactions](#).

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

College Enrollment Update: With May 1, the annual national deadline for college admission deposits, firmly behind us, our incoming first year student number still looks strong at 490. This number is likely to plateau 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! In addition to information on new students, I can update you on our continuing students. Of the 1,287 continuing college students eligible to register for classes for the fall semester, 1,248 have registered for at least 3 courses (full-time). This is more than we had during spring registration last year. Continuing students in the College also participated in room draw last week. Currently, 1,196 have housing assignments either in University housing, in Greek houses, or off campus. We’ll be keeping an eye on these numbers as the summer progresses, but for now everything looks pretty normal.

Employee Relief Fund Coming Next Academic Year: I hope you all saw the email last week from Vice-Chancellor Brigety announcing an employee relief fund to start in the fall. The University will offer new assistance—short-term emergency funds—to employees who experience financial hardship due to unexpected and unavoidable circumstances, like a major car repair, medical emergency, or natural disaster. Over the summer, we’ll be developing the details about eligibility, the application process, etc. The employee relief fund will be created with seed funding from the University and then will be supported by contributions from employees and others.

COVID-Relief Funding: Here is a brief update regarding how the passage of 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 passed directly on to students. This [website](#) provides detailed information. The other half of the funds were incremental to our Fiscal Year 2020 bottom line and were used to reimburse ourselves for some of the \$2.5 million that we refunded in room and board last spring. We received an additional \$1.5 million from the second relief bill that was passed in December 2020. Last time I updated you on this topic we were waiting for clarity from the federal government regarding how these funds were to be used. In April we distributed to students the same amount we distributed in spring 2020. Students received the funds directly or could elect to have the funds applied to their student account. Detailed information on our distribution of CRRSAA HEERF II funds is found [here](#). We were allowed to apply the other \$1 million toward our FY20 bottom line again, to reimburse ourselves for the refunded room and board last spring. And finally, we heard that we should receive another [\\$2.8 million](#) from the bill passed in March 2021. We are in the process of sorting out exactly how we need to handle these funds. It can take a while for the guidance from the federal government to be worked out. 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.

Narrowing of 41A: David Shipps reports that the long-planned and anticipated narrowing of U.S. Route 41A near the intersection with University Avenue has officially begun. The primary objective is to better connect the existing commercial area north of 41A to future expansion on

the south side of 41A, where most of the available land considered for future development sites is located. Narrowing 41A will also create a more pedestrian-friendly downtown. TDOT is funding the construction, and the University will eventually help fund street lighting and landscaping. Reaching this tremendous milestone, more than seven years in the making, would not have been possible without the leadership of Frank Gladu, as well as guidance and assistance from many across the community. Expect to see work beginning this month with temporary lane shifts. The project is anticipated to take about a year, ending in May 2022. Further details will be reported in the *Messenger* this week.

University Farm Center: The University Farm, a program that provides student engagement opportunities as well as food for McClurg Dining Hall, has been growing at a rate of approximately 40% per year. With this continued and projected growth we have an opportunity to provide upgraded facilities that create a space for current needs while allowing growth to continue. As a part of this process, the University contracted Franklin Associate Architects of Chattanooga to walk us through the design process and re-envision a farm center that will support student engagement, food processing, and space for program staff and visitors. After evaluating the options, it was determined that a new facility that meets existing building codes and safety regulations is required to meet the needs of the University Farm. The “old dairy” building, which has provided for the University for many years, will be retired, and a new structure will be built on its location. We are excited about this process and look forward to investing in the students, employees, alumni, and community members who will be welcomed to the University Farm in the new space.

This Time Last Year ...: Last year at this time we were gearing up to start bringing employees back to campus. The process took most of the summer, but most of you have been working on campus ever since. The other big news from a year ago were the abbreviated Baccalaureate, and College and School of Theology Commencement ceremonies that were provided by video. Plans to celebrate these commencements in person have been changed several times. At this point, we plan for the School of Theology Class of 2020 to be celebrated during the 2021 Alumni Lectures & Homecoming in late September. And for the College Class of 2020, after a lot of debate and a poll of the grads, we have decided to hold a traditional version of Commencement in All Saints’ Chapel on May 15, 2022—a week after the College Class of 2022 Commencement services.

Sincerely,

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