

May 19, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

#MakeItToMay

The academic year is officially over for the School of Theology and comes to a close for the College this Saturday, May 22, with the Commencement service at 9 a.m. at Hardee-McGee Field.

We didn't just #MakeItToMay, we *rocked* it!

And now what? *Take a break!* Many of us have put off vacations and downtime for the past year. The two-week break over the winter holidays was helpful, providing the second wind we needed in order to push through the snow and ice, power outages, and everything else that was thrown at us. We have just sprinted our way through a marathon, and now we need to rest and recover, both individually and as an institution. I am hopeful that the summer will provide a respite. Please encourage and support others as they take time away to recharge.

I want to remind you of the mental health resources that Dr. Nicole Noffsinger-Frazier brought to our attention earlier this semester. 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 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.*

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 most 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 for our students. I provided specific detailed information on this topic a couple weeks ago. No decision has been made about whether the University will require students to be vaccinated. As was noted in a recent facstaff email, we are considering all our options, just as we have done over the past 15 months. We are keeping a close eye on this issue as information is changing pretty quickly; I'll update you every few weeks.

Vaccination Information

Even though at this point we are not requiring that students or employees be vaccinated, we strongly encourage you to receive a 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, or lessening the symptoms of, COVID-19.

Once you have been vaccinated, please enter your information into [our database](#). Currently we've received 386 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.

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

Late last week Vice-Chancellor Brigety updated the Domain masking directive in response to the [CDC's most recent guidance](#). The University masking policy is now as follows:

- *While outdoors:* Masks are not required, regardless of vaccination status, unless otherwise indicated by the University.
- *While indoors:* Gatherings of vaccinated individuals do not require masking, unless otherwise indicated by the University. Masking may be required for indoor events or gatherings where the vaccination status of attendees is not known.

Given the fluid nature of recent CDC guidance, the University's masking directive may be adjusted again. Please check the [University's COVID-19 website](#) for the most up-to-date details.

COVID-19 Testing

Employee surveillance testing is over! As of May 13, required COVID-19 testing has been discontinued. However, the Public Health Office will be happy to provide test services if you are feeling symptomatic with possible COVID-19, or need documentation of a negative test to travel. In either case, please email publichealth@sewanee.edu to coordinate. 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.

Thank you, thank you, thank you once again to everyone who made our testing strategy so incredibly effective.

Other University News

Campus Dining: The hours and operations of campus dining venues will change for the summer. (What a nice change from last summer's total closures.) The Cup and Gown will close for the summer after tomorrow afternoon. Evening and weekend hours at Stirling's will vary depending on when summer programs are running, but Stirling's will remain open on weekdays for those of us working on campus. McClurg will be open *only* for students and summer program participants.

This Time Last Year ...: A year ago I wrote about the work of the FOG in "My Perspective." I likened it to working on a jigsaw puzzle without knowing what the final picture would look like. We were breaking down each problem into its component parts and focusing our attention where we could, much like assembling a jigsaw puzzle. The FOG was the mechanism for working on whole parts of the puzzle outside the framework so that later we were able to put our fall puzzle together. To be sure, sometimes we put the pieces or sections into the puzzle a little upside-down and backward. It was daunting. It was frustrating. When we got it right, it was exhilarating. We kept the goal in sight and we made it. Thank you all.

Sincerely,

Nancy