

June 9, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

First, I'd like to apologize. I skipped sending my email last week. I should have explained that I plan to send emails every other week during the summer.

And summer is clearly underway! Tennis camps began last week and will be ongoing until early July. On Monday, Summer School, the School of Letters, and the Advanced Degree Program in the School of Theology all started. Some of these are partially online, so there aren't quite as many people on campus as usual, but it should still be pretty lively, especially compared to last year. We also have several College students on campus for research or summer work. Later this week, participants in a women's soccer camp and a Chinese language camp will arrive. Next week, the Admission Office will host two sessions of "Camp College." Looking ahead, the big arrivals happen June 19 and 20 with the Sewanee Summer Music Festival, the Sewanee Environmental Institute, and session I of the the Sewanee Summer Seminar.

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.

Facilities Openings

All areas of the **Fowler Center** are open as of June 1, including locker rooms. Patrons are encouraged to wear masks. [Summer hours](#) are Monday-Friday, 6 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Swimming pool hours depend on the availability of lifeguards; pool hours will be announced and posted.

duPont Library has hours posted at its [website](#). The library is open to employees, students, and community members. You can also find the hours for Archives and Special Collections on the same webpage.

McClurg Dining Hall is now open for inside dining to faculty, staff, students of the College and School of Theology, and summer program attendees. It is not open at this time to other community members or family members of employees. Door rates (tax included) are \$5.74 for breakfast and \$7.37 for lunch and dinner. Only credit cards will be accepted as payment. Seating is available in the Spencer Room, the Refectory, and on the patio. At this time, the ABC rooms are not available for reservations. McClurg staff will continue to wear masks and they ask that you do, too, until you are seated and eating. McClurg summer hours are 7-9 a.m. for breakfast, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. for lunch, and 5-7 p.m. for dinner daily.

Planning

We are planning for a mostly normal fall semester. We expect that by June 28, campus buildings will return to normal (pre-pandemic) summer occupancy, and students and faculty should plan to

be back in classrooms in the fall. 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. 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 vaccinations 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. Vaccination requirement is a state-by-state determination, as established by the Constitution and confirmed by the Supreme Court. The vaccinations that we require now are all mandated by the State of Tennessee, with religious and other exceptions. The map in the above linked *Chronicle* article showing the location of the schools mandating vaccination indicates they are heavily weighted toward states where the majority voted for Joe Biden. Those schools are backed by, or expect to be backed by, their states. The State of Tennessee has taken action to prohibit state and local governments from mandating COVID-19 vaccination for their employees, as well as public schools, including K-12 and higher education. Two Tennessee higher ed institutions have announced that they will mandate vaccination for their students, [Vanderbilt University](#) and [Maryville College](#). Both will allow religious and medical exemptions. Maryville also is requiring vaccination for employees, while allowing exemptions for “personal preference” for all. Thus far, there has been no publicized challenge to either institution.

No decision has been made about whether the University will require students to be vaccinated. That said, even if we mandate that our students be vaccinated, we will still have students on campus who are not vaccinated due to religious or medical exemptions. Thus, in addition to considering the relative merits and risks to mandating vaccination for students, we are also working on several other fronts. First, we are trying to determine how many students are already vaccinated. We have vaccination information from the spring for many of our continuing students, and incoming new students have the option of uploading their vaccination information as well. Second, we still need employees to upload their vaccination information. As of May 20, 425 employees had documented their vaccination (see below for further information on vaccinations). Understanding our general level of vaccination will help us decide how to prepare. We need to determine if we will continue testing, and if so, who we will test and how often; and what we will do if an unvaccinated student tests positive for COVID-19. And finally, if we decide to mandate vaccination, we’ll need to do so soon to ensure that students have sufficient time to comply.

Additionally, anxiety is heightened about classroom spaces. I have been asked to clarify the University’s position on masking in the classroom. I don’t have much to offer by way of clarification this week. Some people, even if vaccinated, are concerned about the risk of unknowingly being in the classroom with students who are not vaccinated and who do not mask. Because masking is so visible and politicized, concerns have also been expressed about equity in the classroom related to having only those who are unvaccinated being masked. We are looking into solutions to these issues. I appreciate receiving expressions of concern from you, either directly or through your communications with the deans.

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 available vaccines have been proven safe and effective.

Once you have been vaccinated, please enter your information into [our database](#). 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. Currently, we've received about 425 total records of employee vaccinations. [Fully vaccinated](#) employees (with records submitted) are no longer required to quarantine in the event of an exposure as long as they remain asymptomatic. 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](#).

Masking on Campus

Masks are no longer required outdoors, unless otherwise indicated. Masking may be required for indoor events or gatherings where the vaccination status of attendees is not known. Some University facilities where people gather, such as Fowler and McClurg, request that masks be worn inside. Because the threat of COVID-19 infection is still present, though certainly diminished, individuals should continue to take the precautions that make them most comfortable. CDC guidance states, "If you have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may not be fully protected even if you are fully vaccinated." The University's masking directive may be adjusted again if conditions change.

COVID-19 Testing

The Public Health Office will be happy to provide testing 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.

Other University News

Board of Regents meeting: The Board of Regents, our smaller governing board, will meet Sunday through Tuesday next week. This will be their first full, on-campus meeting in a year. Other meetings during the past year have been held by Zoom, or have had limited on-campus attendance. As usual, we will have Open Staff meetings later in June to report the actions of the Board and other updates. In addition, faculty and staff will receive a written summary of the Board's actions.

New staff members: We have recently filled two key roles on campus. Alan Ramirez will be Sewanee's dean of admission beginning July 6, filling the opening created by Lee Ann

Backlund's recent retirement. Alan is currently dean of admission at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, where he also served on the college's President's Council for Diversity and Inclusion. Myles Elledge, C'85, will begin his new role as director of the Babson Center on June 28. He succeeds David Shipps, now the University's vice president for economic development & community relations. Myles has been executive director, health & environment, for a social impact start-up in Durham, North Carolina. He has also been a social impact consultant, serving as a policy and technical advisor for clients such as the Gates Foundation. I look forward to having both Alan and Myles on campus.

Sincerely,

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