

July 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

### **Masking Directive:**

Earlier today Vice-Chancellor Brigety sent a masking directive to members of the Sewanee community. In short, it is mandatory for all persons on the Domain to wear a mask—including residents, visitors, students, faculty, and staff. The directive goes into effect at 8 a.m. on Friday, July 3, 2020, and will remain in force until further notice. [Full announcement](#).

As I mentioned last week, I know that masking can be exhausting, especially when it is necessary all day. However, we must slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in order to reopen in early August. Students will start to arrive as early as late July. We need to take actions to keep one another safe. Please remember to always have a mask with you, even if you are planning to be alone.

### **Return to Work Update:**

This month we'll be moving to Phase 3 of our [Return to Work](#) plan. This will include testing for all employees. More information on our employee testing will be provided next week. Testing will be a self-administered nucleic acid saliva test. Nucleic acid testing is the most accurate form of testing, and saliva collection is much less invasive, and thus easier to perform, than other collection methods. All employees will be tested prior to students' arrival although not necessarily before employees return to on-campus work.

Offices and facilities that most frequently interact with students (except the Fowler Center and the Wellness Commons) need to open by Wednesday, July 8, even if on a limited basis (e.g., reduced hours and with employees working in shifts). This timing will allow those offices to scale up operations by the time our first students arrive at the end of this month. Offices' Phase 3 opening plans will need to include screening, masking, and distancing, as well as other hygiene practices. If your Phase 3 opening plan is not yet completed, please contact [Chris Smith](#) in Risk Management to finalize your Phase 3 plan. If you are unsure about the requirements of your plan, please check with your supervisor.

As we move to have more employees on campus in preparation for the arrival of our students, employees and their supervisors should consult with [Human Resources](#) to determine who may perform their jobs remotely and who will be required to be on campus. Please also consult the new [interim policies](#) previously circulated for more details.

### **FOG Updates:**

The FOG Academic and Health and Safety teams have been diligently outlining what the coming fall will be like for students. A communication was sent to students and families yesterday. It was provided to you yesterday, but you can also find it on our [COVID website](#).

One big change is related to events. University-wide events like Family Weekend, Foundation Day Convocation, the DuBose Lectures, College Homecoming, and the Festival of Lessons and Carols have been cancelled. A convocation to celebrate the installation of our new vice-chancellor has been postponed. We will find alternative ways to celebrate the gowning of students and to hold the Honor Code signing. These are important milestones that we do not want to pass without attention. In general, visits to campus will be extremely limited. Students will not be allowed to have guests on campus this fall, and admissions will conduct campus tours by appointment only, and only to families—who will be masked and distancing, of course.

Thank you to all who were able to join the Zoom open staff and faculty session last week. For those unable to attend, the recording can be [found here](#). There were a lot of questions about masking and safety in general. We were able to answer several of your questions live, and I hope that the communication to students that has been shared with you has answered some additional questions. I've added a few specific questions and answers below. We will continue to work through your questions as we have details to share.

- ***Will face shields be an adequate substitute for face masks?***

No. Face shields protect the eyes of the wearer from external spray, but do not effectively cover the nose and mouth. Face masks mainly protect others from the wearer, who might unknowingly be infected. The greater concern now is the virus being carried in the air from someone's mouth and nose, so a cloth face covering—if we all participate—will significantly decrease the spread of the virus.

- ***What are thoughts on how community engagement activities (both course-related and extra-curricular) will be handled, given that there may be different community norms in play?***

Virtual engagement is always preferable. In-person engagement should be limited, and we should always maintain social distance and masking. Outdoor engagement is safest but it will need to be complemented by masking and physical distancing.

- ***To what extent do you see the spike of cases in Chattanooga having an impact on our reopening plans?***

Spikes in nearby urban settings could impact hospital bed capacity. This is why we must all commit to masking, distancing, and other hygiene requirements. Together, these actions significantly decrease the spread of this virus.

- ***What is the latest date faculty and staff will know exactly which teaching model will be implemented? From what has been said, I assume a number of students will be on campus. However, if the number of cases continue to rise, is there a possibility the semester will be conducted remotely only rather than in a dual model?***

We are planning for two scenarios: 1) mixed-mode with most students and faculty members on campus, and instruction both in-person and remote; and 2) a fully remote instructional semester. We have not set a date for a decision because if the last six months have taught us anything, it is that the situation certainly will change in ways that we cannot predict. Faculty currently are preparing for both scenarios.

We understand some of you have concerns about the spread of the virus after students return to campus. Vice-Chancellor Brigety has been leading the charge (on social media and elsewhere) to help our students understand that the use of masks, distancing, and hygiene is a prerequisite for returning to campus. In addition, all of us need to follow the same guidelines as our students. The mnemonic that the VC is using is The Three W's: Wear a mask (unless alone, sleeping, or eating), Wash your hands, and Watch your distance, staying at least 6 feet apart. This is important to model while on campus, and even more critical when off campus. These measures will help to significantly reduce the spread of this virus.

### **From My Perspective**

At one point it seemed that time was moving so slowly. Now I can't believe that it is already July! In fact, if we are able to bring first-year students to campus for FYP as we plan, they will arrive in just over a month. That's hard to fathom. July is a critical month for us, and things will start to feel very different with more employees on campus and everyone wearing masks. I hope you find a way to celebrate the Fourth of July and to relax, even if it has to be without fried pies and a rainy parade. Hopefully it will still include family and friendship ... masked and distanced as applicable!

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost