

July 8, 2020

Dear Friends,

Masking Directive:

Sometimes there are just too many cooks in the kitchen and everyone has a slightly different recipe. That's what happened last week when we sent out three slightly different versions of the masking requirement to three different but overlapping audiences. Yikes ... and confusion ensued.

So here it is, and we'll stick to one version from now on: In Sewanee (on campus and in the village) you are required to wear a face covering over your nose and mouth when in public or inside buildings other than private residences, except when: alone, asleep, eating or drinking, distancing (at least six feet), or if you have a documented medical condition that precludes you wearing a face covering. These are the baseline rules. There may be additional masking requirements for specific events or facilities. These additional requirements will be clearly communicated.

As Vice-Chancellor Brigety said, "In situations that may be ambiguous with regard to the above exceptions, individuals are asked to exercise their best judgment with regard to their likelihood of spreading the virus to others. *If in doubt, individuals should wear a mask.* Everyone is asked to have a mask on their person at all times so that they may don it when circumstances require it as outlined above." The vice-chancellor's [directive](#) went into effect on July 3.

Remember, you wear a mask for others, not only for yourself.

Return to Work Update:

We are in Phase 3 of our [Return to Work](#) plan. Offices and facilities that most frequently interact with students (except the Fowler Center and the Wellness Commons) should be open today 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. In addition to offices that interact with students, other offices that would normally have frequent walk-in clients will open, also on a limited basis, on July 15.

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.

Employee Testing:

As mentioned last week, all students will be tested for the coronavirus when they arrive on campus, and our testing strategy also includes employee testing. Testing will use 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 this month prior to students' arrival, although not necessarily before employees return to on-campus work. Some testing will start next week, and most of us will be tested during the last two weeks of July. The logistics are being worked out now, and you'll hear more, including about your projected test date and time, in the next week or two.

The University will also perform periodic exposure (or "surveillance") testing throughout the semester. We plan to test about 10-20% of employees each week. Certain employees may be tested more frequently than others. These include commuters, employees or employees with partners who travel as part of their job requirements, parents with school-aged children or children in child care settings, health care providers, and employees who work in food preparation. This follow-up testing will allow the University to track changes and monitor for potential spread of the virus. Remember, this is a noninvasive saliva test, not the nasopharyngeal swab.

Quick Political Reminder:

Here's a random quick reminder. 'Tis the season for political activism, but employees are not to use University resources for political purposes. As a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity, the University is prohibited from contributing to or supporting political candidates or parties. Simply put, no University resources—including personnel, email accounts, copiers, office space, mailing lists, vehicles, or publications—may be used for political purposes. The restrictions on political activity do not apply to any employee acting as an individual, on their own time and using personal resources. The full policy can be found [here](#).

From My Perspective:

I'm just going to pound on masking—sorry, folks. This is such an important topic. We must wear masks. It is unfortunate that masking has been reduced to a political issue. It is not about politics. It is about our well-being. It is about our health and about our livelihoods. We all want the economy to stay open, to recover. I can't imagine the hardship many downtown businesses and furloughed and laid-off employees will face, if our students cannot return or if we need to send them home due to an uncontrolled outbreak. I know masks can be uncomfortable, and conversations while wearing them lack some "personal touch." But they are a must. They work. They decrease the spread of the virus by capturing our spit particles (sorry) as we talk and breathe—spit that, if we are infected, carries the virus into the air for others to breathe. And we cannot always tell who is infected. Decreasing spread of the virus through the "three W's" (Wear a mask, Wash your hands, and Watch your distance) is what will get us all through this with our health and livelihoods intact. And that is not a political statement. It is my wish for all of you from the bottom of my heart. I wear my mask for every single one of you.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost