

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you all well, having enjoyed a really wonderful Fourth of July celebration. The weather could not have been better, and it was good to see people back in Sewanee.

Planning

I can't believe that we'll start welcoming students back onto campus for the fall semester in four short weeks. We're back to a normal arrival schedule and an unmodified academic calendar. College students start to arrive around Aug. 8. Throughout mid-August various student groups will arrive, such as student leaders, FYP and PRE participants, and athletic teams. Orientation for new College students will be Aug. 21-24 and the first day of classes in the College is Aug. 25. Orientation for the School of Theology will be Aug. 13-22, and their first classes meet on Aug. 24.

While we expect that most students, faculty, and staff will be vaccinated by the fall, we are not mandating vaccination. As of today, 237 incoming students (about 48%) have indicated that they are vaccinated or planning to vaccinate, and approximately 938 returning students are vaccinated. Right now this translates to about 70% of students vaccinated. The deadline for providing this information is Aug. 1, so we will continue to monitor and update these numbers.

Students who are not vaccinated are required to participate in onboard testing. Like last year, these students will be assigned an arrival date and time. As long as their test result is negative, they'll be able to move into their housing and join student activities. Unvaccinated students will also be required to participate in weekly surveillance testing. Last year we pulled together resources from across the institution to create a significant testing operation. Onboard testing will still require significant coordination, but our plan for ongoing surveillance testing is to have University Health Services play a major role in collecting these samples, reducing the need to use a dedicated space on campus. Once again, the University plans to offer vaccination options, such as on-campus clinics and transportation to local vaccination providers.

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.

If you are unable to be vaccinated and would like to participate in regular surveillance testing starting in August, more details will follow.

Vaccination Information

Even though at this point the University is 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 442 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 Policy

The University masking policy is now as follows, in response to the [CDC's most recent guidance](#):

- *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.

Please note: CDC guidance also 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. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking all precautions."

Masking will not be universally mandated in classes, but faculty members may require masks in their classrooms, laboratories, and offices. Additionally, organizers (professors, program directors, group leaders, etc.) have the discretion to require masking in classrooms, at meetings, lectures, or events, and for other gatherings. Students are being asked to bring their masks with them back to campus, and we will supply masks to incoming new students.

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

From My Perspective

We are entering new territory yet again. This time last year we had just started to mandate masking. This year we are getting used to not masking unless it makes us more comfortable to do so. As an administration, last year we dictated behaviors in public spaces and classrooms to promote public safety. As we begin to approach COVID-19 as an ongoing public health concern rather than an acute life-threatening situation, University guidance will be less about minimizing community risk as much as possible, and more about making choices based on one's individual risk tolerance and health profile. Please be respectful of others' choices and individual circumstances. We are all trying to find our way through these ever-changing conditions.

Sincerely,

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