

July 14, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Planning

The summer is winding down. Today is the last day of classes in Summer School, tomorrow marks the last day for the School of Letters, and the Sewanee Summer Music Festival concludes on Sunday. We have two major conferences to go—the Sewanee Writers' Conference and SUMMA, the pre-college theological debate camp. The summer has been a great success, and it has been good to have all these visitors to campus!

We are preparing for a mostly normal fall semester. The University has resumed normal operations on campus as of June 28. Students and faculty will be back on campus and in classrooms and laboratories in the fall. Classroom capacities will return to normal, and we do not plan to have tents. Of course the situation could change, but we do not expect to have any travel or visitor restrictions in place for the Domain, and we look forward to having a full slate of lectures, concerts, social activities, and athletic competitions.

Of course, this is just what it will look like on the surface. We still need to consider COVID-19 in our planning, and there are many details behind the scenes to be clarified. This week a small FOG (Fall Operational Group) began meeting to integrate our planning and bring it into focus. Here are some of the items we are discussing:

- Tracking and reporting levels of vaccination and testing.
- Tracking student arrivals for programs, and onboarding those who are not vaccinated.
- Logistics surrounding both onboard testing and weekly screening testing for unvaccinated students.
- Understanding HIPAA and FERPA requirements related to communicating student charges for testing to Student Accounts.
- Tracking NCAA Division III guidelines and rules for testing unvaccinated student athletes, coaches, and game officials.
- A number of other issues related to athletic competitions and travel.
- What Dining Services will look like for the fall semester.
- Any possible limits on gathering sizes for both University and student-led events.
- Visitor access to academic buildings, especially related to admissions visits.

As we did last year, we are informing our constituencies about our planning on a regular basis. Students and their families received [a reminder](#) last week about our vaccination and testing strategy. I'll continue with these updates to employees on a weekly basis as we move into the faster-paced portion of our planning.

A quick FYI: If you are in need of personal protective equipment for the fall, please see below (Other University News) and contact the Purchasing Office.

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. According to the [CDC](#), COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. The University is following the developments of the Delta variant and other variants and their potential impact on our planning. As of now, all US EUA COVID-19 vaccines still demonstrate high levels of protection against severe infection leading to hospitalization and/or death. [There are currently no variants of high consequence](#), meaning that our known prevention measures are effective against the current variants.

As communicated earlier today, beginning on Aug. 2, the University will relaunch the COVID-19 dashboard for the upcoming academic year. It will include vaccination rates for students, faculty, and staff along with results of our screening tests. It is important that the data we display publicly is as accurate as possible. If you have not already done so, please upload a copy of your vaccination card to vaccine.sewanee.edu **as soon as possible**. 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](#).

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. However, if you plan to require masks at events or in your classes, you might consider having some disposable masks on hand, especially for the first few meetings. See below about acquiring personal protective equipment (PPE) for the fall. Offices and academic departments may want to consider making PPE requests as a department to save the Purchasing Office from managing requests from individual staff and faculty members.

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.

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 screening testing starting in August, look for more details to follow.

Other University News

Upcoming Strategic Planning Process: During the upcoming academic year, the University will engage in a strategic planning process, which will result in a new strategic plan to guide our development for the following five years. The Strategic Planning Committee will be led by Scott Wilson, Karen Proctor, and me; I will serve as the committee chair. Due to the large size of the committee, we will do much of the detailed work on the strategic plan in subcommittees organized around four pillars (diversity, equity and inclusion; student success; curriculum review; and new revenue streams). Each subcommittee will have co-chairs, one from the administration and one from the faculty members on the strategic planning committee. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee have been asked to join one of the subcommittees, based on their interest and expertise. We will also solicit participation from members of other appropriate standing committees and the campus more generally. We'll provide more information as our "planning to plan" progresses.

Obtaining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Fall: The Purchasing Office will continue to coordinate the University's efforts to purchase PPE needed for the fall semester. A number of PPE items are currently in the office's inventory. The Purchasing Office will place orders for additional required PPE not in stock so that the University can obtain discounts and lower prices. All requests for masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, face shields, wipes, sneeze guards, and other PPE should be emailed to purchasing@sewanee.edu. Please include the requesting department or individual, the requested item, and the desired quantity in the email. The Purchasing Office will place the orders by July 28. If you have any questions related to purchasing, please send them to the above email or refer to the University [Purchasing Policy](#).

From My Perspective

Wow, I thought last July flew by. This one is going by at lightning speed! Every summer in mid-July I feel like the summer is already over, and this year is no different. However, College students don't begin arriving for another four weeks, and classes start in six. I have to keep reminding myself that we have four to six whole weeks to continue to enjoy a slightly slower summer pace. I've also had a harder time gearing down this year than in the past. That's probably not surprising, given the pace we've needed to maintain since March 2020. I don't know how you are doing, but I find that making myself slow down has taken a lot more intentional effort than usual. I'm a list person, so I'm adding "read a book for fun" to my list! Whatever it takes to get some balance back in our lives now that we have the opportunity to do so!

Sincerely,

Nancy