

July 15, 2020

Dear Friends,

Employee Testing:

Employee testing for COVID-19 started this week. The purpose of this testing is, to the best of the University's ability, to prevent the spread of the virus, to protect the the health and safety of all of us of all of us, and to be able to maintain University operations. Human Resources sent out the employee testing policy earlier this week. Answers to frequently asked questions about testing and other health and safety issues, including masking, screening, quarantine, isolation and tracing, can be found at [this link](#). Groups of between 25 and 50 employees at a time will be tested over the next 10 days.

I had my test this morning, so I can tell you how it works. Human Resources is collaborating with the FOG Health and Safety team to schedule tests for all employees. If you are being tested this week, you have already received an email from HR letting you know the time, or you have been notified by your supervisor. Those of us who work in the Executive Offices, Fulford Hall, and Dean of the College and Global Citizenship offices were tested this morning. Others who will be tested this week include Facilities Management and Sewanee Dining employees. If you cannot attend at your scheduled testing date and time, HR will work with you to find another testing time you can attend. When you go for your test, wear your mask!

All the testing is being done at Cravens Hall, where appropriate distancing is easy inside and outside. Helpers are there to make sure you know where to go and what to do. The saliva test samples from multiple groups are collected over the course of about two hours (8-10 a.m. most days), and groups of employees are scheduled in 30-minute intervals so no one should have to wait around for long. The test itself is super-easy. You check in for screening at the tent near the parking lot, get a test kit, stand in a hula hoop to ensure distancing and [spit in a tube](#) up to a line marked on the tube. (If you've done a DNA test like "23andMe," it's like that.) After you collect enough spit in your tube, you put the funnel part of the tube in a biohazard bag and put the cap on your tube. Then you go inside Cravens to take care of paperwork and turn in your sample. Again, there is lots of help inside as well. That's it! It takes about 20 minutes from the time you get your sample tube.

You will be notified of the outcome of the test within 24 hours either by email or phone call from a University public health officer. Anyone with a positive test result should contact their personal health care provider and follow the provider's medical advice. A period of isolation will be required before returning to work. HR and the Public Health Office will collaborate directly with the employee to conduct contact tracing and notify close contacts of the positive test.

- Close contacts are individuals who are known to have been in contact (within six feet) for 15 minutes or longer with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- In collaboration with the University's Public Health Office, HR personnel have been trained to conduct contact tracing for both on- and off-campus contacts

The University understands that the information needed to carry out these health and safety protocols is confidential and private, and is protected under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Thanks to employees of the FOG Environmental Health and Safety team, HR, and the University Child Care Center for testing last week to help work out the protocols! Thanks to these groups, and some of our international students as well, for helping everyone with their tests. This testing protocol is the same that we will use for student arrival. By the time they arrive, our testing team will be pros!

Admission Office Will Open to Visitors:

Beginning next Monday, July 20, (and for the first time since March) prospective students and families will be able to visit campus and participate in self-guided tours. To safeguard our campus community as well as our visitors, visitors must follow the vice-chancellor's mask directive. In addition, registered visitors will complete a COVID-19 self-assessment before they arrive, and visitors who enter Fulford Hall must have their temperature checked before continuing their tour. Admission counselors will not meet with families in person; online visit options remain available. If you see prospective families on campus, please welcome them as warmly as you always do—from at least six feet away!

Personnel Changes in Health and Safety Team:

As I mentioned in an email earlier this week, David Shipp; Mariel Gingrich, MPH; and Dr. Mary Heath, MD, MPH, have been added to the University's COVID-19 health and safety planning team.

David Shipp, director of the Babson Center for Global Commerce, will temporarily take over management of health and safety planning from Eric Hartman, who needs to take some time away. We are extremely grateful for Eric's extraordinary efforts in moving this work along thus far, both in the EMET and in the FOG.

Mariel Gingrich was recently hired as Sewanee's public health communications officer. She will serve as the primary liaison with public health leadership in the tri-county area and the Tennessee Department of Health; create a public communications campaign both on and off campus in support of healthy and preventive behaviors; apply public health techniques to reduce and control the incidence and the spread of the novel coronavirus in Sewanee; and coordinate student health peer efforts on campus and in the community. Gingrich received a master's of public health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2016.

Many of you might know Mary Heath, MD, MPH. She is a longtime resident of Monteagle and a pediatrician with Sewanee Pediatrics. She is assisting the University part time through November, focusing on testing events and medical protocols. Dr. Heath earned a master's in public health from Tulane University and an MD at the Medical School for International Health.

These additions to the University's health and safety team will help ensure the effective implementation of the University's COVID-19 plan.

From My Perspective:

It's crunch time. We are in full-on implementation mode at this point. The first College students are scheduled to arrive on campus in about two weeks. The first to arrive will be Finding Your Place (FYP) student mentors and residential life student staff members. The FYP students arrive on Aug. 3. They will arrive a few at a time, 100-200 per day through Aug. 16. This staggered arrival schedule will allow us to test them as they arrive. School of Theology students and families will also start arriving in early August, and will be tested as they arrive as well. Testing has started; tents (8) are ordered for outdoor classrooms; we are reserving auxiliary learning spaces all over campus, such as Convocation Hall, the Mary Sue Cushman Room, the Hearth Room, and others; technology in traditional classrooms and auxiliary spaces is being updated; WiFi is being updated in academic buildings, residence halls, and the Quad; faculty are indicating their mode of instruction as in-person, hybrid, or remote teaching, and this information will be made available to students soon; classes are being scheduled in new learning spaces and auxiliary spaces according to mode of instruction and technology needs; and we're hiring additional staff where necessary to ensure that classrooms and other spaces are sanitized on a regular basis and as needed for alternative dining locations. Faculty have been training all summer on new teaching techniques with thanks to staff in IT, to the deans and the associate deans, as well as the directors of the Center for Teaching. College students will be committing to on-campus or remote participation next week. Orientation for students and families has to be ready, and we're thinking about the Honor Code signing logistics and even the fall gowning celebration.

This morning I went for my current favorite run from my house to a dock at Lake Dimmick and back. When I get to the lake, I take a bit of a swim, not really for the exercise, but to just float; to look at the sky; to watch the clouds; to listen to the quiet of the woods in the early morning; and to let all of these logistics flow over me and out. And then I run home and get to work. The list above isn't even half of it. Our team—everyone in Sewanee—is doing everything they can to make student arrival a possibility. Is it easy? No. Is it anxiety-provoking? Yes, in many ways. But everyone is pulling in the same direction, answering questions, writing FAQs and policies, pitching in to do things that are not in their job description—beyond “other duties as assigned” to “anything and everything necessary.” It's incredible and I am so proud to be a part of it. I wanted to be sure to say that. Just in case the course of the pandemic makes opening impossible, I want everyone to know how much I appreciate everything that you do, whether it is listed above or not, whether I am aware of it or not. This is what Sewanee is all about, and it's why our students want to return.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost