

July 21, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Planning

There is not much new to report on the planning front as it relates to employees. Most of our planning is around logistics for student arrival and ongoing testing for those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19. We are continuing to communicate with students on a weekly basis.

We are also gearing up to relaunch our COVID-19 dashboard on Aug. 2, and you can help by uploading your vaccination information! The dashboard 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.

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](https://www.cdc.gov)--and now based on the experience of more than 180 million U.S. residents--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 COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. 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.

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: The CDC recommends that unvaccinated persons wear masks indoors, and we strongly encourage those of you who remain unvaccinated to follow this guidance. CDC guidance also states that people with a condition or who take medications that weaken their immune system should “follow current prevention measures (including wearing a mask, staying six feet apart from others they don’t live with, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces) to protect themselves against COVID-19 until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.”

Faculty members and event organizers 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 for information about acquiring personal protective equipment (PPE) for the fall.

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.

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 specify the requesting department or individual, the requested item, and the desired quantity in the email. Offices and academic departments may want to consider making PPE requests as a department to save the Purchasing Office from managing individual requests from staff and faculty members. **The Purchasing Office will place the orders by next Wednesday, 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

It's déjà vu all over again. It is two weeks after a holiday and COVID-19 cases are on the rise in various areas of the United States, especially those with lower vaccination rates. But we've got this. Our experience over the past 18 months has proven invaluable, and we have the mechanisms in place to make a broad range of necessary changes as the situation warrants. If needed, we can readily mandate masking in all public spaces. We can increase our testing frequency for those who are unvaccinated. We can re-institute the bubble, cancel athletic competitions and other events, prohibit visitors, and close the Inn. We can switch to remote teaching. As important as having these and other mitigation options at our disposal, last year we also developed flexibility and increased our capacity to turn on a dime, sometimes instituting new practices overnight. I know that the presence of variants is causing concern, and I share those concerns. But don't forget what an amazing job we all did last year!

Sincerely,

Nancy