

August 4, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Well, here we go again! College students begin arriving on campus in less than a week, and the COVID-19 Delta variant is complicating our planning.

Planning

Our student arrival plans are in place. Those who have uploaded their vaccination information (78% of them, so far) will be able to move into their residences immediately. Students who have not uploaded vaccination documentation can bring it with them, or bring a negative COVID-19 test result that is no older than 72 hours, or can be tested upon arrival. If they opt to be tested upon arrival, they will need to wait for a negative test result in order to move into their residence. On-campus testing will be set up at Cravens Hall for same-day results from the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory. (You can see the details that were sent to students last week [here](#).) Program directors and our Public Health Office have been in touch with the students regularly, so there shouldn't be any surprises. And thank you to our faithful volunteers!

A quick reminder: If you need personal protective equipment for the fall, please contact the Purchasing Office (purchasing@sewanee.edu).

COVID-19 Dashboard

We have started publishing our [COVID-19 dashboard](#) for this academic year. The dashboard, which will be updated weekly, provides the current rate of vaccination among students, faculty, and staff, and the weekly testing results. The dashboard also provides 2021 data on new COVID-19 cases in Franklin, Marion, Grundy, and Coffee counties, as well as a link at the bottom to the CDC's COVID-19 data tracker website.

Changes to COVID-19 Policies

We have updated several policies in the past week. I've summarized them below.

Employee COVID-19 isolation and quarantine leave: On July 23, the Human Resources Office announced that due to the ready availability of free COVID-19 vaccines, the University has amended the way it considers [time away from work for isolation or quarantine](#) due to COVID-19 infection or exposure. Effective Aug. 1, 2021, COVID-19-related time away from work is treated like any other illness. Employees are required to use accrued sick or vacation leave for these absences in order to receive pay. If you have COVID-19 or any other illness, we respectfully ask that you remain home and not expose others.

Employee COVID-19 testing: On July 28, I announced that as of July 30, [the University has discontinued COVID-19 test services for employees](#), except in cases where a test has been ordered by an employee's primary care physician. Employees with symptoms should seek the care of a doctor and make use of the numerous local testing resources to ensure their ongoing

health and safety. If you are unable to be vaccinated and would like to participate in regular screening testing, please contact [Human Resources](#).

In addition, if you are symptomatic or concerned enough to be tested, please do *not* report to work. Likewise, if you get tested for COVID-19 at a local provider (CVS, Walgreens, etc.), do not return to work until you have received a negative result. Your safety is vital and so is the health of your colleagues who may become ill as a result of an exposure.

Masking policy: On Aug. 2, we announced changes to the [University's masking policy](#). *Effective Aug. 3, 2021 (yesterday), and until further notice, all students, employees, and visitors must wear face coverings/masks over their nose and mouth when they are in public spaces inside all University buildings. While outdoors, masks are not required unless otherwise indicated by the University.*

We made this change as a result of the CDC updating its recommendations around masking due to the spread of the Delta variant—which is markedly more transmissible than earlier strains of the virus. Now, the CDC recommends that both [fully vaccinated](#) and [unvaccinated](#) people wear masks indoors when in areas of the country with “substantial” or “high” transmission of COVID-19. Three counties constitute our area of concern and, according to the CDC, [Franklin, Marion, and Grundy counties currently meet those conditions](#).

If the transmission rate in our area drops into the “moderate” or “low” designation, the University will consider relaxing its masking policy. Because the transmission rates are likely to vary over time, it is possible that the masking policy will be updated during the semester. For the most up-to-date information, check the [University's COVID-19 website](#), and look for email announcements.

Vaccination Information

The key to ending this pandemic is for as many people as possible to get vaccinated. Even though at this point the University is not requiring that students or employees be vaccinated, the University urges everyone who has not yet been vaccinated to do so at your earliest opportunity, especially given the high level of community transmission of [COVID-19 in our tri-county area](#). The available vaccines have been proven safe and effective. The University's Public Health Office is available to help answer your questions or concerns, and to help members of our community find vaccinations. You can also find a vaccination location at www.vaccines.gov/.

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](#).

Sincerely,
Nancy