

August 5, 2020

Dear Friends,

### **Student Arrivals**

First-year and transfer students have their course schedules and are providing us with their enrollment plans. Their enrollment forms are due tomorrow, but thus far we have 209 of approximately 525 expected responses with 91.4% studying on campus, 8.1% studying remotely, and 0.5% not participating.

Continuing students started arriving last Friday with Finding Your Place (FYP) mentors. They were followed on Monday by the FYP students and some PRE leaders. You can see the [full arrival schedule online](#). Students will continue to arrive through Aug. 16. Next week you will begin to really feel a difference in the density of people on campus.

Students are being tested for detectable coronavirus as they arrive. Their testing regime is the same one that we went through. Thus far we have tested 180 college students with one positive test. You can remain updated on our testing results with our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

This year more than usual, families and students are feeling uncertain about what life will be like on campus. If your supervisor agrees and you have time to volunteer for the following opportunity, please do.

- Move-in: You can make students feel welcome as they transition to campus. Volunteers are needed from Aug. 7 to Aug. 16 to help groups of up to 10 students engage in healthy distancing activities, indoors or out, until their test results are available.
- You will receive more details and a sign-up form this afternoon. The move-in process has changed; if you already have volunteered for the former process, Lauren Goodpaster will be in touch with you about the changes.

### **Student Quarantine and Isolation**

What happens when we have a student test positive upon arrival? If the student lives within a day's drive, we are asking them to return home to isolate for at least 14 days. This will both give their family the comfort of being able to monitor the student's health at home, and help to keep our quarantine and isolation space available for others. They will be able to participate in their classes from home. If they are unable to return home for isolation, they will isolate in Sewanee and will participate in their classes remotely.

We have arranged to use St. Mary's for student isolation and quarantine with the Sewanee Inn as a backup location. Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others until they know they are not infected. Isolation is used to separate someone with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 (both those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. Meals will be delivered, and quarantined and isolated students will receive support for online learning until they are medically cleared to re-engage. Sick students will receive

medical care via telemedicine or in-person from the health care professionals in our University Wellness Center. Our close partnership with STRHS will help us manage any severe health challenges.

### **COVID-19 Training**

Don't forget to complete your COVID-19 training in [Brightspace](#) as outlined last Friday in an email from Mary Wilson, director of human resources. This training takes less than 30 minutes to complete. It explains our current understanding of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), how to prevent exposure, and what to do if you become sick. All employees are required to complete this training by Aug. 17, the first day of undergraduate classes. Students also will complete this COVID-19 training.

### **Daily Screening Using the Ascend Platform**

Another item that Mary Wilson explained last Friday was our new screening protocol. According to the [CDC](#), daily screening of workers and others entering the workplace for symptoms of COVID-19 is an important component of preventing transmission and protecting workers. Many of us have been doing daily temperature checks since June, and these established routines will continue within each department. The Ascend platform will take us through these daily health questions as outlined in our [health and safety protocol](#):

- You enter your ZIP code (which it remembers from your original set up).
- You are asked to indicate any symptoms you may be having that would be consistent with COVID-19 (shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, chills, etc.).
- You record your body temperature and how you obtained it (oral, temporal/forehead, etc.).
- You are asked to enter an estimated date of any known possible exposure to a confirmed case, or if someone in your household has been exposed.
- You enter the date of your last test and the result (which it remembers from your original setup).
- You indicate whether you plan to be on site for work or you plan to work remotely that day.
- Once you go through the list of questions, and as long as you are cleared, there is a green checkmark with the date.

We will complete the daily wellness screening on our phone, tablet, or PC. After we receive our "checkmark" for the day, we'll be able to use that to move about campus as we enter buildings and spaces shared with others, and will not need to re-screen as we enter each new building. All students, faculty, and staff must complete this daily wellness screening and receive their "checkmark" prior to engaging with others on campus. You should have received an email on Monday with a link to the platform and instructions for setting up your password so that you can begin to use it.

There have been questions and concerns expressed about using the platform, especially as it relates to privacy issues. The Ascend platform keeps data protected, in accordance with the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). That means that the medical information you enter is available only to our public health officers, in the case of employees, and to University Health Services personnel, in the case of students.

Environmental Health and Safety Director Chris Smith sent an email this morning with some Ascend troubleshooting tips and FAQs. If that information did not resolve any issues you might have had with the platform, you can email [ascendhelp@sewanee.edu](mailto:ascendhelp@sewanee.edu) for assistance.

## **#ProtectTheBubble**

As you know, “Protect the Bubble” has become a catchphrase indicating that we must create and protect a metaphorical "bubble" to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus and mitigate its effects on campus and in the community. We will closely monitor the virus through screening, testing, tracing, quarantine, and isolation to prevent its spread. We are taking many additional steps to protect Sewanee’s bubble, some of them aimed at discouraging visitors to campus.

- **Admission:** On July 20 the undergraduate admission office opened for visitors. Prospective students and families have been able to visit campus and participate in self-guided tours. The Admission office has stopped allowing students to register for self-guided tours, but we know we will have a few more students visiting throughout August. Every visitor is screened to #ProtectTheBubble. Admission has filmed campus tours and recorded webinars on a variety of topics. And they offer virtual visits (both live and pre-recorded sessions) and virtual counselor appointments to interested students.
- **Sewanee Inn:** The Sewanee Inn will close for overnight stays starting Aug. 17; it plans to reopen on Nov. 20. It will remain open until Aug. 17 so families can stay overnight while dropping off their students and will reopen for student move-out at the end of the semester. In the interim, it could be used as a backup for student quarantine and isolation if needed. The restaurant will remain open. The closure of the Inn will reduce revenue significantly, but is essential for protecting the bubble by discouraging visitors from out of town.
- **Short-term rentals:** Consistent with the closure of the Sewanee Inn and protecting our bubble, leaseholders received a communication on Friday from Sallie Green, director of the lease office, extending our blanket prohibition of on all short-term rentals by leaseholders, whether absentee or permanent residents, until classes end for the fall semester on Nov. 20. We realize the impact that this prohibition has on leaseholders. We appreciate your cooperation and adherence to the policy for the health and safety of our entire community.
- **University events:** University-wide events like Family Weekend, Foundation Day Convocation, the DuBose Lectures, College Homecoming, and the Festival of Lessons and Carols have been canceled, as have all athletic competitions and weddings on the Domain. A convocation to celebrate the installation of our new vice-chancellor has also been postponed.
- **Travel form:** We ask that you also help to protect the bubble. We know that some travel is essential and many of you may even be taking your children to college elsewhere! In order to most efficiently conduct surveillance testing for all faculty and staff, we will ask you to update your travel plans via [this Google form](#). This will allow us to identify those who may need to have more frequent surveillance testing. Commuters do not need to fill out this form for travel to and from work.

## **From My Perspective**

Our strategy is better than sound—it's amazing. We have an unparalleled testing plan among institutions of higher education. We have tested all employees and are testing students as they arrive. We are getting test results back on the same day (thanks to biology faculty Alyssa Summers and Clint Smith, who have been working on testing at Baylor School since March). We are following up with isolation, quarantine, and contact tracing. We are stressing hygiene with the three W’s (wear your mask, wash your hands, watch your distance). We are taking extreme measures to #ProtectTheBubble. We are in a unique

position to pull this off, partly because of our relative isolation. But it will take all of us continuing to be vigilant to make this work.

I see students everywhere wearing masks and sitting in camp chairs. Only about 170 students are here now so we have a long way to go. Our population will get denser, and, as it does, it will feel riskier. Masking in particular seems to be a point of some confusion.

**The Masking Directive** says: In Sewanee (on campus and in the Village) you are required to wear a face covering over your nose and mouth when in public or inside buildings other than private residences, except when: alone, asleep, eating or drinking, distancing (at least six feet), or if you have a documented medical condition that precludes you wearing a face covering. It also says: *There may be additional masking requirements for specific events or facilities.*

The confusion seems mostly to do with distancing indoors. It is impossible to predict when you might suddenly come across another person inside as you turn a corner or go through a door—with no room to maneuver. And it can be particularly difficult to maintain six feet of distance in narrow hallways and restrooms. Therefore, we should all wear our masks whenever we are in a public space indoors. This is the only way to ensure that we are always in compliance with the masking directive. And we need to reinforce masking with anyone we come across who is inside without a mask, and from whom it is impossible to maintain a distance of six feet.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost