

August 18, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

There must be a “conservation of email length” physical or social media law somewhere. Last week’s email was super short. This one is super long. Happy reading!

Vaccination & Testing: the University’s current approach

Many of the details about the University’s COVID-19 policies and protocols are reinforced below and we do our best to keep the campus community informed of adjustments and updates in these weekly emails and on the [COVID-19 website](#). This week, in addition to reiterating policy, I want to describe the shift in the University’s approach to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic for the academic year.

Admittedly, our approach is quite different now that considerable time has passed since we closed the last academic year in May. The University’s strategy for fall 2021 is based specifically on our heightened expectations for the community. With free vaccines and testing readily available, the University expects all students and employees to take individual responsibility for their own health and, importantly, to do their part to help protect our community by following University recommendations, policies, and protocols.

For its part, the University continues to take the health and safety of our community very seriously. We have implemented the current mask policy and are requiring weekly screening tests for unvaccinated students. Further, the University strongly encourages (and will help to facilitate) vaccination for all students and employees, including holding on-campus vaccination clinics. Importantly, we will monitor our weekly test results to determine whether adjustments are warranted.

We have done this before—individually and collectively. My colleagues and I are confident that the procedures are in place to monitor the situation, to evaluate our options, to consider expert guidance, and to make the right decisions for the University and the community. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to a successful semester.

Undergraduate Arrivals

Students continue to arrive. We have about 745 undergraduates on campus at this point, including the 350 scheduled to move in today: first-year students in PRE, as well as more athletes for soccer, volleyball, and cross country. Field hockey players arrive tomorrow, New Student Orientation begins on Saturday, Aug. 21, and the rest of the returning College students will move in next Monday and Tuesday. The first day of classes in the College is Wednesday, Aug. 24. Orientation for School of Theology students began on Sunday, Aug. 15. Their first day of classes is Tuesday, Aug. 23.

Those students who have uploaded their vaccination information (86% so far) or provided a current negative COVID-19 test are able to move into their residences immediately. Those who opt to be tested upon arrival need to wait for a negative test result in order to move into their residence. On-campus testing is set up at Cravens Hall.

COVID-19 Dashboard

Keep track of our testing results and vaccination rates by visiting our [COVID-19 dashboard](#) for this academic year. The dashboard will be updated weekly. It is important that the data we display publicly is as accurate as possible. All employees who have already uploaded their vaccination card received a confirmation email to that effect from the Public Health Office on Monday. ***If you are vaccinated but did not receive a confirmation email from Public Health, 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 [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)—and now based on the experience of more than 198 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 the semester. 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.

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](#). If booster vaccinations become recommended and approved, we will update the policy such that employees will also receive paid time off this fall to receive an additional shot.

Isolation and Quarantine

We've received many questions about isolation and quarantine for employees, especially related to vaccination status. We are following guidance from the CDC and are updating the FAQs as conditions change. The University is following the CDC's current guidance, which takes the spread of the Delta variant into account:

- Per [CDC guidelines](#), a ***vaccinated*** student or employee who has been in [close contact](#) (within six feet of someone for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone who has COVID-19 will *not* be asked to quarantine away from campus as long as they have no symptoms.
- The [CDC further recommends](#) that fully ***vaccinated*** people who have come into close contact with someone with COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days following the date of their exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive.
- Per [CDC guidelines](#), an ***unvaccinated*** student or employee who has been in [close contact](#) (within six feet of someone for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone who has COVID-19 will be asked to quarantine away from campus. The period of quarantine may be up to 14 days. The Office of Public Health will

determine the length of quarantine for students. An employee's doctor will determine when they can return to work.

- Per [CDC guidelines](#), if **any** student or employee—regardless of vaccination status—tests positive for COVID-19, they will be asked to isolate themselves away from campus. Time away from campus can be [10 days or longer](#). The Office of Public Health will work with students to determine when they can return to campus. An employee's doctor will determine when they can return to work.
- Close contacts, vaccinated or unvaccinated, who have tested positive in the past 90 days do not need to be tested.

We understand that some of you may be negotiating across multiple sets of standards given that your family members may have additional guidance coming from their own workplaces or schools. If they or your physician put more stringent restrictions in place, please follow their standards.

Masking Policy Reminder

On Aug. 2, we announced changes to the [University's masking policy](#). *Effective Aug. 3, 2021, 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.*

Faculty and staff in various work areas are encouraged to remind anyone not complying with our indoor masking policy to please do so. Given the many changes to policy, it is easy to forget that even fully vaccinated persons need to mask indoors. I recently went to our office kitchen and was halfway back to my office before I realized I was unmasked! Please be gracious in reminding, and when you are reminded. If you encounter blatant resistance, you can contact HR for staff (hr@sewanee.edu), the Deans' offices for faculty (tlpapill@sewanee.edu; jturrell@sewanee.edu), the Dean of Students Office (dstudent@sewanee.edu) for undergraduate students, or the associate dean for community life dmjackso@sewanee.edu for School of Theology students.

Remember, we made this change in the masking policy 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. Masking significantly decreases the transmission of the virus, including the Delta variant. When you wear a mask, you protect yourself and others.

If the transmission rate in our area drops from “substantial” or “high” to “moderate” or “low” designation, the University will consider relaxing its masking policy. Because 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.

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

Employee COVID-19 testing

As you know, [the University is not performing screening testing of unvaccinated employees](#) at this time. We are encouraging vaccination because it prevents serious illness, and we are requiring indoor masking to prevent the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant of the virus. Many factors went into the testing decision, including the following:

- We are focusing our efforts and resources on unvaccinated students; they are the most vulnerable population because of their communal living and shared bathrooms.
- This same population of students is the most likely to be the source of an outbreak that would jeopardize our ability to provide an on-campus, in-class experience for our students.
- Given the current requirement for indoor masking, the risk of transmission between any two individuals who are both masked is very low, regardless of their vaccination status.

Employees with symptoms should seek the care of a doctor. Instituting required employee testing by the University lab comes with significant state requirements. While the University was able to meet the less stringent requirements in place last year, there were obstacles to continuing to offer testing services indefinitely. You can make use of the numerous local testing resources, such as pharmacies, to help ensure your ongoing health and safety. In addition, the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostic Lab can test, for a fee, any employee who has a requisition completed by their personal physician. Referring physicians do not need to be in Tennessee.

Remember, 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.

Other University News

Employee Use of Sewanee FitWell: We know that employees are eager to join students in FitWell, the workout space in the University Wellness Commons. As you know, this facility was restricted to student use only when it opened last year due to our COVID-19 protocols. We are excited to explore further the possibility of employee use of the facility. However, due to the Delta variant, we need to postpone employee access to FitWell until such time as conditions allow. In the meantime, please watch for an employee survey designed to better understand your fitness interests and needs as we plan for the possibility of employee access to FitWell.

Sincerely,

Nancy