

Sept. 1, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We've made two important pivots regarding COVID-19 policies and practices in less than a week, and I'm grateful that we're able to make such significant changes quickly when needed. Remember that you can always find the latest updates [here](#).

As I hope you are aware by this time, last Thursday the University announced a requirement that all students, faculty, and staff receive and report a [COVID-19 vaccination](#). Our campus-wide COVID-19 vaccination requirement goes into full effect on Oct. 5, 2021. By that date, all students, faculty, and staff must have received either both shots of a two-dose regimen (for Pfizer and Moderna) or the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Exceptions will be made for legitimate medical and religious reasons; if you are in either category, be sure to file your request by Sept. 8 to ensure it can be reviewed promptly.

The University changed its vaccination policy in response to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) giving its first [full approval to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine](#). This decision follows guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the recommendation of the American College Health Association.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in the winter of 2020, Sewanee has remained committed to making the decisions necessary to support our employees and help protect the health and safety of the campus community while providing as normal an educational experience as possible for our students. This commitment has taken various forms over the course of the past 18 months, from becoming an almost completely remote campus in the spring of 2020 and taking extreme measures last academic year in order to help ensure the health and safety of the campus community while providing a mostly in-person learning experience for our students, to recommending vaccination this summer, and then requiring vaccination this academic year.

The University is hosting a listening session to hear from employees and understand our shared concerns. The first session will be a Zoom webinar at 1 p.m. this Friday. EAC representative Tammy Elliott will host the event. More information on this session and others will follow soon.

And yesterday brought another quick pivot. After confirming 10 positive student tests for COVID-19 in four days, on Monday we made the decision to test *all* students today through Friday. We have already had a few more positive test results. The purpose of this testing is to gain a more thorough understanding of the presence of the virus on campus, so we can take the right steps to ensure that we begin the new year safely and that we can continue having an on-campus experience this semester. Testing is taking place in Convocation Hall each day from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. This is required testing. You can help by encouraging your students to participate promptly.

We are indebted to a dedicated crew of volunteers and professional staff who are putting in many extra hours to mobilize this effort while continuing to support our regular operations. Incredibly, although not surprisingly, they have successfully recreated our testing infrastructure in less than 24 hours. Personnel from Public Health, University Health Service, and the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostic Lab had to check supplies, divide the students into testing cohorts, print barcodes and

put them on tubes, and perform countless other tasks to get ready. And this morning the real work began, processing 1,700 students and samples in three days.

Any students who test positive will be asked to return home to isolate. Certain students may not have the ability to return home readily, and we are fortunate to have secured the DuBose Conference Center as a location where they can stay overnight. This all has been an amazing feat, and many employees have set their work aside to help on very, very short notice. Thank goodness for our community and our courage!

Vaccination Information

The Public Health Office and UHS are available to help answer your questions or concerns, and to help members of our community find vaccinations. In addition, Walgreens staff will be on campus soon to offer vaccinations, and you can find vaccination sites nearby by using vaccinefinder.org.

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

COVID-19 Dashboard

Keep track of our testing results and vaccination rates by visiting the University's [COVID-19 dashboard](#). The dashboard is being updated at least weekly. It is important that the data we display publicly is as accurate as possible, and we have seen dramatic increases in our reported vaccination rates over the past two weeks. ***If you are vaccinated but have not yet done so, please upload a copy of your vaccination card to vaccine.sewanee.edu as soon as possible.***

Masking Policy Reminder

Now that the campus is full, don't forget 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.* For the most up-to-date information, check the [University's COVID-19 website](#), and look for email announcements.

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. Please be gracious in reminding, and when you are reminded!

Other University News

Strategic Planning Process: The University is embarking on a strategic planning process that will take place over the course of this academic year. I am chairing the process, and Scott Wilson, Karen Proctor, and Parker Oliver are assisting me in managing the process. The Strategic Planning Committee has been divided into four subcommittees, one for each of our themes (student success; diversity, equity, and inclusion; revenue sources; and curricular renewal and innovation), and each is headed by co-chairs consisting of an administrator and a faculty member from the committee. We have recruited additional faculty and staff for the subcommittees, mostly from other standing committees such as the Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee. In order to build the capacity of this very large team to engage in strategic planning, Karen Proctor led a group of about 40 of us through two workshops at the end of last week. I am very grateful to the folks who dedicated several hours of their Friday afternoon and Saturday morning to these workshops. We will provide regular updates on the process and let you know how you can learn more about and engage in the process as it moves along.

Sincerely,

Nancy