

Sept. 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

Testing

Yep, we're in the midst of round four of COVID-19 testing for students this week. Round three went great, as did our employee retesting. While we ran more tests in round three than in round two, we had fewer positive test results. We have been able to maintain our isolation and quarantine space because most students are able to go home for these purposes. All of these are good signs. See the University's testing results on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

For our ongoing employee retesting, please be on the lookout for an email requesting that you arrive at the test site in the parking lot behind Fulford Hall for a retest. We are continuing to test members of certain departments and many employees who commute for work. Please note that we have changed our individual reporting protocol. Beginning Aug. 31, we no longer provide an email notification of a **negative** COVID-19 test result. Anyone with a **positive** test result for COVID-19 will receive a phone call within 24 hours from the Public Health Office with information about next steps. Anyone who has questions about their test results should email the Sewanee Public Health team at publichealth@sewanee.edu.

In the event an employee experiences COVID-19 symptoms and would like to be tested, they will undergo the same procedure as their initial University-administered saliva test. Upon receipt of positive test results, employees must work with their primary care providers (PCP) in order to determine how to proceed given established University policies related to COVID-19 specifically, and taking ordinary sick leave. The University will not provide medical counsel in any form, and employees are solely responsible for seeking any follow-up medical care needed upon receipt of COVID-19 test results. For employees without a PCP, the period of quarantine or isolation will be determined by the University's Office of Public Health in consultation with the [Tennessee Department of Health](#).

#ProtectTheBubble

Some of you have expressed interest in how we are handling undergraduate student behaviors. The first thing to note is that our students want to do the right thing and remain in Sewanee. But as I am sure you can appreciate, it is hard to follow all of the rules all of the time. For the first major COVID-related infraction, College students are sent home to study remotely for a two-week quarantine period; they are required to take the University COVID-19 test (with a negative result) in order to resume in-person classes. The second major COVID-related infraction results in the student being sent home to study remotely for the remainder of the semester.

A number of other schools, ranging from Marist College to the University of South Carolina, are suspending students who break their COVID-19 rules. I suppose we could get there, but our faculty have designed their courses, even those that are being delivered in-person, so that students can continue the course if they need to study remotely. Therefore, we are able to take a

different approach, one that I think is superior. I do not want to trivialize the pressure this has put on our faculty and a number of related offices, such as the Registrar's Office and the Dean of Students Office, to keep track of which College students are studying in person and which are studying remotely, why they left, when they are allowed to return, and the conditions for their return. It would be easier to just suspend them, or send them home for the rest of the semester on the first infraction, but we believe most of our students will respond positively to our system.

Because we believe protecting our bubble is so important, we are providing fun opportunities for students here on campus. We have arranged for food trucks to come to campus on a regular basis; we have an inflatable movie screen for outdoor movies (weather permitting); and we are arranging deliveries from restaurants and stores, most of which will be in place next week. The shop in the Wellness Commons is already open with personal items like toothpaste. College students who need to leave campus for legitimate reasons are allowed to go to doctor appointments; and attendance at events such as weddings and funerals necessitates home-quarantine afterward. It is taking a while to get some of this in place, but thus far students and their parents are very appreciative of these efforts.

Thank You

I've decided that there are *so* many people, divisions, offices, and areas to thank that I will dedicate some space in every communication this semester to mention a group or two and outline some of the things they have been working on. There is danger in doing this, I know. I'm likely to leave someone out who really deserves mention. And yet, I think it is important that everyone across campus understands what others are contributing to our efforts, even if that work is not immediately visible.

Athletics: Planning for the Fowler Center reopening started in the early summer. Implementation of this initiative was led by Assistant Athletic Director Dickie McCarthy and Head Strength Coach Joe Rodgers. Head Men's Lacrosse Coach Nick DiBernardo has scheduled coaches and staff to disinfect all the fitness equipment, most of which (78 pieces) was moved by the coaching staff to the Fowler Center fieldhouse in July. Max Obermiller, Sam Mashburn, and Nan Long have led efforts to reopen the swimming pool, and Tracey Braden adjusted the PE schedule to allow for more outdoor classes. Jimmy Davis from Business Services helped procure necessary personal protective equipment for the athletic staff, and Fowler Center custodians (Debbie, Sue, and Chase) have kept Fowler in great condition. When the decision was made by the Southern Athletic Association to cancel fall competitions, Layton Jackson handled the communications via the athletic website and social media; head coaches were very deliberate and supportive in their communications with student-athletes and parents about what to expect when they returned in the fall. Ray Knight, the head athletic trainer, spent countless hours devising our "return to play (practice)" protocols based on current NCAA guidelines, and with Ray's invaluable guidance, fall practice schedules were developed and approved. When the call went out for volunteers to assist with campuswide testing, a majority of coaches and staff offered to support this vital effort for the University. Sewanee's coaches continue their recruiting efforts (now virtual) with an eye toward May 1, 2021, commitment day for athletes in next year's entering class. Athletic Director Mark Webb is currently working with his SAA colleagues to prepare tentative spring 2021 sport schedules should athletic competitions and team travel be

permitted. Decisions about the spring, including intramurals and club sports, will be confirmed and communicated later this fall.

Student Life: The entire Student Life division has many different departments, all of which are essential in support of our students. In addition to the recognition given to the University Health Services staff last week for their critical role in our testing strategy, I want to recognize the efforts of Residential Life, Campus Activities, and the Dean of Students Office. These offices worked tirelessly to ensure our successful opening and involved our students as they put new policies and processes in place, meeting all summer with student leaders via Zoom. First they had to arrange for students' return to campus in June to retrieve their belongings, and then the staff had to turn around and create a plan to safely house more than 1,500 students on campus this fall. They have packed and shipped boxes to students; responded to thousands of parent and student phone calls and emails; sponsored socially distanced activities for the campus community during COVID-19 testing and beyond; made multiple runs to CVS to pick up students' prescriptions; and prepared more than 1,500 gift bags with essential items like masks and sanitizer for all students when they arrived. They also organized a virtual orientation for all new students; trained the SOP leaders, proctors, and the conduct board; and participated in new faculty and faculty advisor training. I send a big shout-out to Brittany, Lauren, Hannah, Sam, Matt, Rachel, Bobby, Colin, Becca, Cody, Ace, TC, Danielle, Barbara, John, Daniel, and Erica.

From My Perspective

I am trying hard to see the positives that are coming out of this pandemic. Admittedly, as we get close to one million deaths worldwide, finding the positives is difficult. And I sometimes wonder if it is even appropriate to look. But on Sunday morning I attended the installation of our new University chaplain, the Rev. Peter Gray, on the Quad. The setting was stunning. The events team really outdid themselves. The stage, altar, chairs, podium, and flowers were simple and elegant. The University Choir (about 12 members) sang beautifully—yes, masked and distanced—but *wow!* Most of the attendees sat in chairs with appropriate distancing and masks, but some brought their own chairs, or moved their chairs into the shade as needed. Some of you know that I love the pomp and circumstance of our various ceremonies, convocations, and commencements. The voices of the choir and the organ filling All Saints' Chapel are glorious. This was different. It was an elegant mix of formal and informal, and it, too, was glorious.

We had the Honor Code signing on the football field, and we'll have the induction into the Order of the Gown this Friday on the Quad. Like the students' chairs, the changes wrought by this terrible pandemic are reminders of our adaptability and resilience. I hope that we retain some new traditions as we move forward. Maybe the new traditions can be flexibility and change!

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost