

Sept. 30, 2020

Dear Friends,

Spring Planning

So far we don't have much to report in the way of decisions regarding plans for the spring semester. We are considering the weather and our spaces (indoor and outdoor), the academic calendar, and the class schedule. We have information from College faculty on their thoughts with regard to modes of instruction, as well as teaching space capacity and locations (indoor or outdoor). We hope to have some decisions on the main calendar dates soon. Our current goal is to start and end largely on a regular schedule so that we do not disrupt summer programs and classes to a significant degree.

We also do not have any definitive information on athletics. The athletic directors of the Southern Athletic Association have constructed potential competition schedules, but whether teams will compete has not been decided. That will be up to the presidents of the SAA schools. There is no date set for a final decision, so we're in a wait-and-see mode for now.

Testing

Over two weeks in a row with no students testing positive: I don't want to get too confident, but that is something to celebrate! I am so appreciative of everyone in University Health Services, in our Public Health office, operating the testing site, and running the actual tests at the lab. Every Saturday Drs. Alyssa Summers and Clint Smith give up the entire day to finalize our test results for the week. Every Monday starts a new round, and so far we have not strained our quarantine resources. See the University's testing results published each morning on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Our testing venue will move to the Fowler Center next week, starting Monday, Oct. 5. The entire operation will be located within the netted lower basketball courts in the field house. Entrances and exits will be through the doors at the lower level. Please follow the signs. Other operations within the Fowler Center, such as the workout equipment, will not be affected.

Flu Shots Available Week of Oct. 12

Health professionals always recommend getting a flu shot. This year, it's especially important.

- We are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a flu shot is an essential way to help you stay healthy this year.
- Fewer cases of the flu will help decrease the burden of illness on our local health care system.

- Flu and COVID-19 can have very similar symptoms, so it is best to protect yourself against influenza now in order to make diagnosis easier should you become ill.

The flu vaccine will be available to employees during two clinics to be held on Oct. 12 and 16. Looks for more details from HR soon. (Students will receive flu shots next week.)

#ProtectTheBubble

Public health experts had expected an increase in COVID-19 cases during the fall. You are likely aware that there has been a recent uptick in cases in Franklin and surrounding counties. This news should serve as a good reminder to each of us to keep taking those familiar common-sense precautions, *both on campus and off campus*: Limit your social interactions, wash your hands thoroughly, and keep wearing your mask.

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.

College Academics: I want to thank those in the College who worked, and continue to work, tirelessly, to make the academic program succeed. Throughout the spring and summer, the Center for Teaching, in close collaboration with the associate dean for inclusion and faculty development and the LITS staff, helped faculty members learn new approaches and create new ways of instruction. A group of dedicated staff created additional learning spaces and adapted the regular classrooms to the realities of social distancing and hybrid teaching. The Registrar's Office created unique class schedules for departments and students according to individual needs. Department chairs and program directors supported their faculty and students to make sure that the right things were happening at the right time for the right people. Staff in those departments made sure labs were prepared, work-study students were organized, or co-curricular activities happened in new and innovative ways. One positive result of the pandemic is that it has refocused our attention on the many details that we previously took for granted when it comes to providing a superior educational experience for our students. It has also highlighted the many people who make that happen. I am grateful for all those who have created our exceptional academic environment.

University Relations pivoted to continue to engage our alumni, parents, and friends in the life of the University while supporting the increased demands for communication with our various constituencies. While events and travel are on hold, Alumni and Parent Relations has employed creative new tactics to hold virtual events with our alumni and parents and to introduce our new vice-chancellor to the broader Sewanee family. Likewise, Major Giving and the Sewanee Fund staff have found new ways to cultivate, engage, and steward the University's donors. It was good to see that over the past year Sewanee ranked number 26 in "Alumni Giving" among the nation's

top 100 liberal arts colleges. Moreover, it is evident that the strength, success, and promise of the *Stronger Truer* campaign placed Sewanee in a strong position to make the decisions necessary to open this fall with students on campus.

Marketing & Communications has been helping to launch a new academic year and recruit a new class as usual while also managing communications for the University's COVID-19 efforts. All the outreach to students, families, employees (including these messages), and the community on the web, in social media, via email, and through webinars has to pass muster with their team. Parker Oliver has spent countless hours in meetings with the EMET and FOG to ensure that we provide clear and transparent communications about our efforts and policies.

Steve Keetle, Gina Wright, and Tammy Elliott and the Print Services team have been instrumental in designing and producing the COVID-19 campus signage. The ever-adaptable David Syler has produced many of the needed video updates while managing the migration of the University website to a new platform. Mary Ann Patterson has made sure the School of Theology's unique audiences and messages are integrated into the University plan. Buck Butler, in addition to editing all these communications, has promoted the University's plans through photography and social media. Laurie Saxton has managed media requests and helped to write many of the communications, as well as building and maintaining the COVID-19 website.

From My Perspective

Wow—making it to the end of September is a milestone. This is the seventh of 14 weeks of classes in the College—the end of this week is midterm. And we've been running this show since the first group of students showed up for their tests on July 31. So far so good.

Seven weeks to go. Hang in there. It has been a long haul since March—sometimes a slog and sometimes exhilarating. The pressure is not just COVID-19 with the weight of pandemic logistics and worrying about our loved ones here and elsewhere. We also have the political atmosphere heating up around the upcoming election and the nation's continued racial tensions. I hope you are each finding opportunities to take a minute for yourselves. Do something you love. Exercise and eat well. Take care of yourselves and each other, and together we'll all be able to get a good rest after classes are over.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost