

October 14, 2020

Dear Friends,

Spring Planning

The Fall Operational Group did not meet last week due to the meetings of the Boards of Trustees and Regents, so there is not a lot new to report on this topic. The Registrar's Office and academic departments and programs are working on the spring course schedule. Students will be able to choose whether to study on campus or remotely for the Easter semester. As in the fall, classes will be a mixture of experiences. Courses will be offered in a range of formats, from fully in-person to fully online. Of course, we will continue to be ready for a possible shift to fully remote learning in the spring if health conditions or local, state, or federal guidelines require it. But our fall semester experience has given us confidence that we will be able to have the majority of our students on the Mountain, as safely as possible, for the spring.

Some plans for the spring are still to be determined, including the possibility of varsity athletic competition. The presidents of the Southern Athletic Association schools will make a decision about athletic competition in the coming weeks. And while we hope to hold in-person Commencement exercises in the spring, our ability to do so will depend on the course of the pandemic.

Winter Break

As you know, we are also considering plans that need to be made for the winter break. That is what I am calling the period from Nov. 22 to Jan. 31 when we will not have classes in session on campus. Staff received an announcement on Monday from Vice-Chancellor Brigety explaining that all staff will be paid their normal weekly wages during that time, even if, due to the nature of their jobs, they are not working. This is similar to the way we handled compensation in the spring when we guaranteed regular pay to staff through June 30. As usual, staff will have paid days off during the time between Christmas and New Year's Day. This year there will be two full weeks of paid leave when the University will be closed for the official Christmas holiday.

Testing

Folks, this is working! We just had a week with zero positive test results. In addition, we have had only one student test positive in the past four weeks. Every Monday starts a new round of testing, and so far we have not strained our quarantine resources. There's more work to do as we head toward November, but everyone should be very proud. Way to go! See the University's testing results published each morning on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

We are very excited to announce that Sewanee is establishing our own testing lab. Among other things, and most importantly, this means we will be able to do our own COVID-19 testing beginning in January, rather than having to transport test kits to Chattanooga each day. The Sewanee Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory (SMDL) will be led by Dr. Alyssa Summers as the technical director. Dr. Clint Smith will be the molecular lab specialist. Both of them will

continue to teach as members of the faculty. We have received our “CLIA number” (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment, necessary licensure from the state of Tennessee), and equipment is arriving. The laboratory will be located in Spencer Hall. As you may be aware, Drs. Summers and Smith have been working with our test partner Baylor Labs since March, and we are excited to have an on-campus resource for this very important work. Look for more details coming later this week!

Free Flu Shots Available Friday, Oct. 16

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.

Students received flu shots last week when they got their weekly COVID-19 tests.

The flu vaccine will be available at no cost to employees during one more clinic to be held on Oct. 16 at the Fowler Center. Drop by between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. as your schedule allows, and follow the COVID-19 test site signs. Please note that the time period from noon to 1:30 p.m. typically has a higher volume of students testing at the site. Adjust your drop-in time as you feel appropriate.

This year we can offer both the traditional flu vaccine and the high-dose vaccine that is recommended for people ages 65 and up. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. I am getting my shot on Friday!

Admission Visitors

The Office of Admission plans to reopen in a limited fashion to in-person visits. Why, when we have been so careful about protecting the bubble? The decision follows a good deal of discussion and reflection by the vice-chancellor's cabinet and includes protocols that take into account both campus safety and the future of the University. A Sewanee campus visit often makes the difference between a student's choosing Sewanee and attending another institution. Tours are limited to seniors in high school plus one guest; tour groups will be strictly limited to nine visitors; and all visitors are required to complete a COVID-19 health assessment prior to arrival, wear a mask at all times on campus, and practice appropriate distancing. In addition, academic buildings and University dining facilities are off-limits; the only building that visitors will be able to enter is All Saints’ Chapel.

Fortunately, we have not had so many students in quarantine at one time that we needed to use the Sewanee Inn for that purpose. So in order to serve those prospective families who want to visit campus, the Sewanee Inn is now open to officially registered Admission Office guests. The

Inn will be open to the general public from Nov. 18 until Feb. 1. The golf course will also be open to the public between semesters.

Thank You

There are *so* many people, divisions, offices, and areas to thank that I am dedicating 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.

The Police Department and the Fire Department have been working diligently since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, providing protection to the Mountain 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Officers, dispatchers, and firefighters have stepped up, worked extra shifts, and spent time away from their families to do so. Officers have conducted mask patrols in the downtown area, provided security at the testing sites, and obtained the first shipment of hand sanitizer that came to the Mountain from, believe it or not, Jack Daniel's. They recently hired four additional security officers who will be working with our Greek patrol officers on weekends and will support special events as needed. There are several new firefighters from the community, and the student firefighters will begin recruiting over the next few weeks. The student firefighters are an integral part of SVFD's response, and several remained on campus during the first days of the pandemic last spring. In the last couple of weeks, the SVFD has assisted in a wilderness rescue, responded to several fire alarms on campus, provided support at the hospital for a helicopter transport, participated in a multi-agency exercise at the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly, and visited the Sewanee Children's Center and the Otey Children's Center for Fire Prevention Week. The Police Department has responded to multiple calls for service; investigated suspicious activity on campus; recovered stolen property; assisted the Monteagle Police Department, Grundy EMS, and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office; helped a veteran in need; and spent many hours on patrol to ensure the safety of our community. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our first responders. Be sure to thank them when you see them.

Our **Sponsored Research** office is a one-person shop, and Dr. Pollyanne Frantz has remained busy since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Her expertise in navigating the complexities of federal grants as our authorized organizational representative has been invaluable as we've applied for state and federal relief funds throughout the spring and continuing into this fall. We were allocated about \$1.1 million in CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief funds and Pollyanne ensured that we applied on time and managed our interface with the federal government compliance systems. We are in the midst of applying for additional funds through FEMA and TEMA, a process that has become exceedingly complicated. Others involved in these efforts are Tom Sanders in University Advancement, who helped us apply for additional CARES funding; those who worked on the proposals, including Betsy Sandlin and Vicki Sells; Beth Cragar in Financial Aid, who distributed the CARES funds to our students; and Treasurer Doug Williams and his staff, who provided the infinitely long lists of institutional data necessary to apply for federal grants. I am very grateful to all of them.

From My Perspective

Fall is in the air and the leaves are changing. This is my favorite season in Sewanee. It lasts forever, the weather is cool but not cold, the running is good, there's no fog, and it's usually sunny. Typically, the academic year is still new, and everyone is excited to be here. I love going to soccer matches and the occasional football game and enjoying the feel of fall on a college campus. Fall is just pretty perfect. But this year I want it to fly by so we can get to Thanksgiving—and Thanksgiving is not a holiday I generally think much about. I don't particularly like turkey (we don't always have turkey), dinner is a lot of work, and there are the leftovers to contend with. And then there is the problematic symbolism of the whole affair. But this year Thanksgiving has a new meaning for me. It marks the *finish line*, an opportunity to celebrate all we have accomplished in the previous nine months. I know students and faculty will still have finals, the Registrar's Office will need to handle grades, Student Life and Facilities Management will need to clear out and clean up the residence halls—and we might still have an outbreak, so I may be jinxing us. But Thanksgiving, like everything else, will feel different this year, and I can't wait!

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost