

October 21, 2020

Dear Friends,

Spring Planning

We are starting to make good progress on planning for the Easter semester. Fortunately, our COVID-19 protocols have been tested, tweaked, and retested, so we are way ahead of where we were last spring and summer. As mentioned last week, the Registrar's Office and academic departments and programs are working on the spring course schedule. We hope that students will be able to register for classes before they leave campus on Nov. 20. We are working on the January arrival schedule for students with a number of considerations in mind, including the status of athletic competitions, early arrivals to study for comprehensive exams, the number of students our lab will be able to test on a daily basis, and student travel time to Sewanee. We plan to be able to inform students soon of their assigned arrival dates and test times so that they can plan ahead. And we are considering how best to solicit students' intentions for studying on campus or remotely during the spring semester. There are many details to consider, but this time we are able to identify most of them ahead of time.

Testing

Another boring week ... thank goodness. Only one student positive and no employee positive results last week—that makes only two student positive tests in the last five weeks. We are all so grateful to our students for making this work. Please continue to thank them when you see them. Every Monday starts a new round of testing, and so far we have not strained our quarantine resources. Together I think we will make it to Nov. 20. See the University's testing results published each morning on our [Daily COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

As I mentioned last week, we are setting up our own COVID-19 testing lab. You can find more information in the announcement [here](#).

Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Narcotics

This is unrelated to COVID-19, but important for all of us to be aware of. You may recall that shortly after the start of this semester in August, Vice-Chancellor Brigety committed to a review of the student code of conduct regarding alcohol and drug expectations and enforcement. At its recent meeting, the Board of Regents supported convening a committee for the purpose of examining the use of alcohol and narcotics at Sewanee. Jay Fisher and Nicole Noffsinger-Frazier will co-chair the Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Narcotics (ACAN), which will be composed of faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, trustees, and regents.

Committee members will be named soon. They will have a goal of recommending to the Board of Regents in February a framework to guide the University's approach to substance use by its students and a new policy that better addresses the nature of the alcohol/drug culture on campus, recognizes the legal issues, supports and educates our students, and provides more equitable consequences for students who violate the policy. If approved, the new policy could be implemented for most of the spring semester.

I appreciate this group's willingness to take on an important and urgent matter in the life of our community.

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.

Since the pandemic started in the spring, staff in the **Office of Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability (OESS)** have continuously worked in-person. In the absence of the normal cadre of work-study students and volunteers during the spring semester and summer, the team pitched in to help Sandy Gilliam and Nate Wilson keep trails clear after spring windstorms and a tornado blew through. Similarly, time was also spent in the field with Kevin Fouts to ensure that faculty research projects stayed on track. And Sara McIntyre jumped in feet first, learning her new job and supporting the team in their roles all while exploring ways and opportunities to engage and support students during this time. Carolyn Hoagland and Carl Conry nimbly switched the University Farm's food sales from McClurg to the local farmers market and also sent a large portion of their summer production to local food banks. Additionally, Sara McIntyre, Kevin Fouts, and Amy Turner have spent many hours since July helping with COVID-19 testing. Amy and her team also focused on student engagement by holding remote programming and an in-person new student orientation, and have held events aimed at institutional goals such as mental health and wellness, skill building, and general experiential sessions.

Our **Human Resources** team has been busy since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, providing updated interim policies and information for employees as the University continues to adapt to employee needs during the pandemic. Jacqueline Blair, Chris Champion, Maris Owens, Jessica Welch, and Mary Wilson collaborated with our Public Health Office to test all employees before students arrived. You have likely seen Chris working at the testing site. Jessica has been involved in employee relations, compensation scenarios, and the Employee Advisory Committee, as well as helping hiring managers with options and scenarios for staffing during turnover and transitions. Jacqueline and Maris are processing all incoming employees, both faculty and staff (including temporary employees via staffing agencies and internal temporary employees), to accommodate the University's ever-changing needs. In addition to the need for day-to-day employee support, the pandemic has raised many new concerns. For example, Mary and the team have worked to help employees with schedule changes due to child care issues, quarantine, and isolation.

From My Perspective

Last night I attended a new event (all masked, of course). It was a very nice small gathering in Guerry Garth for our student recipients of the Advent semester awards and prizes. I usually announce these at a fall convocation. Of course, we haven't had a convocation, so we put together an intimate event that, for me at least, ended up being much more meaningful. Instead of just reading their names as one item in a long litany of things that need to be accomplished during a convocation, after which the certificates would be put into the SPO, the students were able to walk onto the stage in the Garth to accept their certificates from the vice-chancellor. They were able to celebrate one another, and we were able to celebrate their accomplishments more intentionally. The event was livestreamed for parents and for those students who received their

awards remotely. A few faculty members from the departments making the awards also attended. You can see the list of award recipients [here](#).

There are many sacrifices we are making to navigate our current situation. But is it also providing us the opportunity to rethink some of our traditions. I wrote about this at the beginning of the semester after the Honor Code signing in the rain, the beautiful installation of our new chaplain, and the gowning in the Quad. I'm getting tired, but it is good to know that we still have the capacity to be innovative and creative where it counts—especially in supporting our students and their accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost