

November 16, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

### **News from the Cabinet**

I recently attended a conference with three of my Cabinet colleagues. The Council on Independent Colleges hosts an annual conference for chief academic officers with two other C-suite colleagues. This year it included chief diversity officers and chief student affairs officers. Sibby Anderson-Thompkins, Erica Howard, Lisa Stephenson, and I drove to Louisville, Kentucky, together last Saturday, Nov. 6, and returned Tuesday, Nov. 9. The title of the conference was *Constructing the Future: Collaborating for Success*. We spent three days listening to plenary speakers and participating in sessions and workshops centered around the interconnections among the areas of curriculum, student success, and belonging. It was particularly helpful to attend with a team so we could discuss new and old ideas. The conference was perfectly timed for us to bring these ideas back to the strategic planning process and the subcommittees focusing in these areas. It was also great to connect closely with my colleagues, all of whom are relatively new to Sewanee. So while we missed most of Homecoming weekend, spending time to get to know one another is an important part of building relationships that enhance our ability to work together.

### **Strategic Planning Forums**

As you have heard, the [strategic planning process](#) is addressing these four areas: 1) [elevating diversity, equity, and inclusion](#); 2) [improving student success](#); 3) [curricular renewal and innovation](#); and 4) [economic development and Domain stewardship](#). The subcommittees that are focusing on these initiatives welcome your input. Two forums for employees are planned for tomorrow, Wednesday, Nov. 17, during which you can offer your views on the University's future direction. Please join the discussion on Zoom at either noon or 7:30 p.m. The [Zoom link](#) for the two sessions will be the same. At the forum, we will offer a brief overview of the four areas of the plan and then offer two rounds of discussion in Zoom rooms organized around the four areas, e.g. a room on student success, a room on the curriculum, etc. Your ideas are needed! A student forum is also being held this week.

### **Masking Policy Reminder**

Yes, even though we are mostly vaccinated, and it's been a while since I reminded you, 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. It is easy to forget

that even fully vaccinated persons need to mask indoors. Please be gracious in reminding others of the masking policy, and when you are reminded!

We continue to support indoor masking through our mandate because the [CDC continues to recommend](#) that both [fully vaccinated](#) and [unvaccinated](#) people wear masks indoors when in areas of the country with “substantial” or “high” transmission of COVID-19. Three counties constitute our area of concern and, according to the CDC, [Franklin, Marion, and Grundy counties continue to meet those conditions](#).

If the transmission rate in our area drops into the “moderate” or “low” designation, the University will consider relaxing its masking policy. Because transmission rates are likely to vary over time, it is possible that the masking policy will be updated during the semester. For the most up-to-date information, check the [University’s COVID-19 website](#), and look for email announcements.

### **COVID-19 Dashboard**

And don’t forget about our [COVID-19 dashboard](#). The dashboard, which is updated weekly, provides the current rate of vaccination among students, faculty, and staff, and weekly testing results. The dashboard also provides 2021 data on new COVID-19 cases in Franklin, Marion, Grundy, and Coffee counties, as well as a link at the bottom to the CDC’s COVID-19 data tracker website.

### **Other University News**

#### **Emergency Fund**

Chris Champion in Human Resources recently announced the creation of the Employee Emergency Assistance Fund. The fund is a source of short-term assistance intended to help employees recover financially from unexpected and emergency situations such as major car repair, medical emergency, a natural disaster, accident, or catastrophe. It was created with seed funding from the University and will be supported by contributions from employees and others.

Details about the fund, including how it works, eligibility requirements, the application process, and how to contribute to the fund can be found [here](#).

#### **First-Gen Voices**

Last week, the University joined colleges around the country in celebrating first-generation students. Some Sewanee students, faculty, and staff who identify as first-gen shared the unique challenges they have faced and the many ways they’ve overcome them. [Read about their personal experiences in their own words here](#).

#### **New Athletic Director**

John Shackelford began his tenure as Sewanee’s new athletic director yesterday, Monday, Nov. 15. I hope you have had an opportunity to congratulate John on his new role and to thank Mark Webb as his term as director of athletics comes to a close.

## **Remembering Ava Hingson**

We were reminded by Dean Papillon last week that tomorrow is the first anniversary of Ava Hingson's passing. Some of you were close to Ava, and almost all of us know students who were close to her. As we remember her, be gentle with yourself and also be aware that for some of our students, this time will bring painful memories. Your kindness and your understanding will be great gifts to them and to one another.

## **Hamilton Hall Renovations**

Following their meeting in October, the Board of Trustees was provided with information about the renovation and programming plan for Hamilton Hall. [Keep track of updates about that project here.](#)

I hope everyone has a fulfilling Thanksgiving break.

Sincerely,

Nancy