

December 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

Spring Planning

We are still keeping an eye on some processes that will indicate the number of college students who intend to participate in their Sewanee education during the spring semester. A total of 1,671 students have registered for at least one course, and 1,626 have at least 12 hours (three courses), a full course load. This latter number is in line with our expectations based on normal retention and attrition. Students can continue to register for classes and modify their class schedules into February. Another indicator of expected student participation will be bill payments. Statements went out earlier this month; payment or nonpayment of room and board fees will indicate whether a student will be on campus or studying remotely. And finally, Residential Life also will be gathering information soon about students returning to campus in January.

Winter Break

The fall semester is over! Finals are completed, and all grades should be submitted.

Enjoy your holidays. Don't forget that the 3W's remain our most powerful tool to combat the spread of COVID-19. As the number of cases continues to rise in our area, please remember to practice the 3W's: [Wear your mask](#). Wash your hands. Watch your distance. It's important to follow good [COVID-19 protocols](#) both on campus *and off campus*, and [to continue to limit your social interactions](#).

Athletics Announcement

Following the Southern Athletic Association Council of Presidents' vote to allow student-athletes who play fall and winter sports to compete in the spring semester, the University announced precautionary measures for its teams with the goal of keeping student-athletes, coaches, and game staff safe while limiting community and campus exposure to COVID-19. [Read more here](#). There are further details in [this FAQ](#).

Testing

Our Public Health Office has provided [information about COVID-19 testing during the break](#).

Between Jan. 20 and 22, all employees will be tested prior to the majority of student arrivals. This will help ensure everyone is safe and healthy as we re-establish the bubble and begin a new semester. Additional details and information about the testing schedule will be sent to all employees in January.

We have had some questions about the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory (SMDL) performing COVID-19 tests for members of the community who are not affiliated with the University. At present, we do not have the licensure needed to allow us to test populations other than students and employees in a non-surveillance capacity. This means that we are unable to provide a singular test to a community member who, for example, is ill or needs proof of testing in order to travel. Those instances do not qualify as surveillance. Second, we don't yet have the necessary billing and reporting infrastructure for testing community members. Both items are actively being addressed now that the lab is operational.

Finally, the SMDL will be closed from Dec. 19 through Jan. 3 during the University holiday. As a result, symptomatic employee testing will not take place during this period of time.

Other Public Health News

The University is adopting a new quarantine protocol for students and employees based on new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance:

Employees and students may discontinue quarantine seven days after their last exposure to an individual testing positive for COVID-19 if they:

- Continue to participate in contact tracing for an additional seven days.
- Report no symptoms.
- Receive a negative test result after testing on day six or seven of their quarantine, prior to returning to campus.

After ending quarantine, employees and students are still required to:

- Wear a mask, stay at least six feet away from others, wash their hands, avoid crowds, and take other steps to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).
- Watch for symptoms until 14 days after exposure.
- Immediately self-isolate if symptoms emerge, and contact publichealth@sewanee.edu.

As I am sure you are aware, COVID-19 vaccines are in the news. It does not appear that vaccines will be distributed widely enough to have an effect on our spring semester decisions or activities. We'll wait to see how things develop over the course of the next several months before making any determination about requiring vaccinations for summer or fall. As you can see from the information below from our public health folks, it takes up to two months to build immunity after receiving the first dose of either of the two vaccines currently in the news.

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine

- Currently recommended only for those ages 16+ (evaluation for 12+ began in October).
- Two-dose regimen.
- 21 days (three weeks) between shots.

- 90% effective seven days after second dose (~82% efficacy after first dose).

Moderna vaccine

- Currently recommended only for those ages 16+ (evaluation for 12+ began in December).
- Two-dose regimen.
- 28 days (four weeks) between shots.
- 94% effective at study day 57 (after first dose).

Karen Tharp at University Health Services has been in touch with the Tennessee Department of Health about vaccinations in our state. She has learned that in Tennessee, colleges and universities are scheduled to receive vaccinations in Phase 3 of the vaccine rollout, which won't be until the summer.

Karen is working on the required application so that UHS will be able to provide the vaccination as soon as supplies are available. None of this is written in stone, of course. We'll need to remain flexible.

From My Perspective

I hope that the peace and joy of this holiday season, regardless of which holidays you celebrate, provide you with the rest and rejuvenation that you require. Thank you for your tremendous support of our campus and community during this historic time. I'll see you in 2021!

Sincerely,

Nancy Berner

Provost