

January 12, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

We are underway once again, thanks to all of you! Classes started in the School of Theology on Monday, and in the College yesterday. The Cabinet met last Friday for an hour to discuss contingency planning related to potential staffing shortages due to the omicron variant and had a follow-up discussion at our regular meeting on Monday. I am grateful for the additional planning, and for your role in helping us provide the in-person, on-campus student experience that is the hallmark of a Sewanee education. Our students appreciate it as well. They are very excited to be back, and are glad that they did not start their semester remotely as some of their friends at other institutions are doing.

### **COVID-19 Updates**

**Testing:** Students were asked to test for COVID-19 prior to returning to campus and to stay home to isolate if they tested positive. Students have also been asked to test again using a state-supplied rapid test within 72 hours of their arrival. Results from these Bluetooth-enabled tests are automatically reported to the state. We are asking students to report any positive test results to University Health Service (UHS), since the state will not report them back to us. In an effort to be as transparent as possible, and understanding the limits of some of the data we will be receiving, a new table has been added to our [dashboard](#) to report the data from the rapid antigen tests. We know only how many tests were *distributed*, and how many students *reported* positive tests to us. Thus, we have separated these data from the usual PCR testing data that you are used to seeing and that we will continue to update.

UHS will continue to provide COVID-19 testing for symptomatic students and students who have been a close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19. As in the fall, students who test positive after arrival will be advised to isolate in place if they cannot return home; we are offering KN95 masks to students isolating in their rooms and to their roommates.

The Sewanee Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory (SMDL) can test employees and bill their insurance companies, but only for tests ordered by a personal physician for persons who have COVID-19 symptoms or who have been exposed to persons known to have COVID-19. Thus, we cannot charge insurance companies for surveillance testing. But, as was the case last semester, the SMDL can perform surveillance tests with direct pay if the test is ordered by the employee's personal physician.

**Boosters:** The University strongly encourages all eligible students, faculty, and staff to receive a COVID-19 vaccination booster shot as soon as possible. Booster shots prove effective against the omicron and delta variants; boosters also reduce the severity of COVID-19 among those infected. In addition, the CDC has [announced that those who have received boosters do not need to quarantine](#) after an exposure to COVID-19. This will greatly simplify our management of COVID-19 on campus for all who are boosted. **An on-campus booster clinic is scheduled from**

**noon to 4 p.m. next Monday, Jan. 17**, in room 203 of the Wellness Commons (no appointment needed).

You are encouraged to voluntarily report your booster record in [our database](#). This is a HIPAA-compliant survey that requires the date you completed your vaccination series, Banner ID, and a photo of your CDC-issued vaccination record card.

In addition, we are closely monitoring the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Vaccination and Testing Emergency Temporary Standard currently before the U.S. Supreme Court. Results of a Supreme Court verdict may affect what is required of faculty, staff, and student employees in terms of vaccination/booster status and testing protocols. Next steps following any Supreme Court action will be communicated to the campus community as soon as possible following that action.

**Masks:** The [University's masking policy](#) remains in effect this semester. Knowing that we are likely to experience an increase in the highly transmissible omicron variant on campus this month, we have stocked up on [KN95 masks](#). Some studies have shown these medical-grade masks to be more effective than cloth face coverings in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Employees who would like a supply of masks or other personal protective equipment (PPE) for work should contact the Purchasing Office ([purchasing@sewanee.edu](mailto:purchasing@sewanee.edu)). The Purchasing Office will place orders for additional required PPE not in stock so that the University can obtain discounts and lower prices.

### **Other University News**

**[Nikki Giovanni Poetry Reading at 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 13, in Convocation Hall.](#)** Nikki Giovanni is one of this country's most widely read poets. In the late 1960s and early '70s her lectures, poetry readings, and frequent appearances on the Black entertainment show *SOUL!*, along with her extensive lecture tours, made her one of the most recognizable poets of the Black Arts Movement. She began teaching at Virginia Tech in 1987 and since then has published two collections of essays, several illustrated children's books, and 10 volumes of poetry for adults. She will receive an honorary degree from the University on Friday and will give a reading from her work on Thursday.

**[Winter Convocation will be held at 4:30 p.m. this Friday, Jan. 14, in All Saints' Chapel.](#)** About 75 new members will be inducted into the Order of the Gown and two honorary degrees will be awarded. Retired Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.—former space shuttle commander, commanding general of Marine expeditionary forces, and NASA administrator—will give the Convocation address and will receive an honorary degree. Poet and author Nikki Giovanni will also receive an honorary degree during the Convocation.

### **Events celebrating the life of Martin Luther King Jr. to be held on Monday, Jan. 17**

- **Renowned choral ensemble Kinnara will perform at 4 p.m. in All Saints' Chapel.** Kinnara will perform David Lang's Pulitzer Prize-winning composition *the little match girl passion*, along with a premiere of *Southern Dissonance: Portraits for a New South*, which draws texts from civil rights activists. The concert is free and open to the public and is presented by the Performing Arts Series.

- **A reception celebrating the life of Martin Luther King Jr. will be held at 5:30 p.m. in Cravens Hall.** Speakers will share uplifting messages reflecting this year's theme of "It Starts with Me: Shifting Priorities to Create the Beloved Community." There will also be song selections from a number of University choirs and a special performance by the Sewanee step team.

I appreciate all your hard work!

Sincerely,

Nancy