

August 1, 2021:
President's Letter to Traditional Students and Parents

I can't wait to get this fall semester started. You'll be here in just a few days, and it will be marvelous to see the campus come to life as you arrive. It is going to be a great year:

1. residence halls are nearly filled to capacity.
2. new talented faculty are joining us – psychology, math, business, nursing, chemistry, dance, CIS
3. our brand-new dining commons looks fabulous.
4. athletic teams are ready to build on the success of last spring's seasons.
5. and some exciting new projects are being announced soon after you arrive!

Plus, don't forget, as long as you press on and graduate from Belhaven (earning at least 60 hours if you're transferring), you'll receive a FREE masters degree. We are the only university in the world offering this!

A few weeks ago, we were expecting the fall would be “nearly 100% back to normal.” Sadly for our country and the world, the pandemic has taken a dramatic turn for the worse in the last three weeks. So as we begin the year, we'll all need to work together to protect each other from the spread of the powerful Covid-19 Delta variant.

Delta is much more contagious than Covid-19 of last winter and spring. Young adults and children are 2 ½ times more likely to become infected. And Delta is so strong that even vaccinated people are catching the virus, although their cases are much milder and rarely require hospitalization.

Although we'll start the semester with Covid restrictions (that hopefully could be eased as the academic year progresses) I'm thankful we know the precautions to take to help protect each other. We've all learned how to cope with Covid restrictions, and we can do this for a while longer. Blazers don't quit!

Even if you're convinced you are physically invincible, there are many people on our campus who are medically vulnerable, and we must do everything possible to protect them. So let's all work together to do that, because Jesus taught us, we are doing this for Him: *“when you did it to one of the least of these, you were doing it to me!”*

I am personally rejoicing in God's provision of effective vaccines that give us the best protection from the virus, as well as slowing the spread of Covid-19. If you've not yet been vaccinated, I'd strongly encourage you to consider if the vaccine is right for you. Some tell me, “I don't want to be vaccinated because we don't know what problems the vaccine could cause.” That is a viewpoint to be considered. But, we clearly know the damage Covid could cause – even if you don't die, it could severely impact your health for months or years.

This is important:

Belhaven University will NOT require vaccines. But we strongly encourage students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated. And, as you'll see from the safety plan, if you're vaccinated, your fall semester will be "fairly normal," except for wearing a mask. If not vaccinated, you'll need to take more precautions.

We have set safety protocols are similar to last spring, but for now, only requiring weekly testing of athletes and dancers - because of the nature of their activities. The details are attached, but in summary, our safety requirements include:

1. Masks must be worn indoors by everyone.
2. Unvaccinated athletes and dancers will be tested weekly in our on-campus Testing Center.
3. If unvaccinated, a 10-day quarantine is required if you are in close contact with someone with Covid-19.
4. Vaccinated students are EXEMPT from BOTH testing and quarantine (if asymptomatic).

Many times a day I've been praying for you because I don't want you to get sick. Although many assume "catching Covid is just like the flu," most threatening to college-age students is potentially causing long-term damage to the lungs, heart, nervous system, kidneys, liver, and other organs.

That's the tough news. But the good news is this: "Alleluia! For our Lord God Almighty reigns." This theme verse for our academic year reminds us that God is in control, and He will use all things for His glory – including Covid-19.

This will be a great semester as long as we all work together and follow the safety requirements. God is teaching us much through Covid, and many good things have come out of this challenging time – including your free masters degree!

I'll see you soon.

Serving Him always,

Roger Parrott

P.S. Be sure to read the important attachment – [BU Covid-19 Safety Requirements](#).

Vaccines are FREE at your local pharmacy or clinic. We will also be offering them on campus at the start of the semester.

The reality for the world is that medical experts projecting what is ahead have succinctly summarized, "*with the rise of the über-transmissible Delta variant, you're either going to get vaccinated, or going to get the coronavirus.*" I'm thankful God has now provided vaccines for everyone in our country and in many parts of the world.