Dear CAU Students, Faculty, and Staff:

The past few months have undoubtedly been the most unusual times any of us has ever seen. COVID-19 has presented both challenges and opportunities for Clark Atlanta University to strengthen and further promote a “wellness culture.” With that in mind, I am happy to announce CAU’s plans for reopening campus this fall. This Spring 2021 Reopening Plan provides the details on how the University plans to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, the safety and well-being of students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors.

Our objective is three-fold: to have the highest number of students on campus we can safely accommodate; to maximize in-person instruction supplemented with some remote online instruction; and to allow as many faculty members as possible to resume their teaching and research. To that end, CAU’s Crisis Management Center Steering Committee (CMCSC), led by Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Eli Phillips, worked 24-7 to coordinate the details for reopening the campus this fall. Focused intently on evaluating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the University, the CMCSC’s subcommittee structure of six working groups concentrated on areas related to the Student Experience, Teaching and Research, Campus Operations, Finance and Legal matters, Human Resources, and Communications & External Relations. Each subcommittee represented a wide cross section of the University community.

The goal of the CMCSC was to advise me on actions the University should take to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 on CAU’s campus, and I assure you that this plan has been thoroughly vetted and evaluated through the lens of the latest and best public health information available. The CMCSC accomplished its work by staying abreast of all guidelines, regulations, expert opinions, executive orders and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Governor’s Office, the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the City of Atlanta, and other public health agencies. Furthermore, in developing the plans for reopening in the fall, CMCSC members and I met and collaborated with other Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC) member institutions (Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Morehouse School of Medicine) on health and safety planning measures related to COVID-19, including collective approaches to reopening our respective campuses for students, faculty, and staff. These collective approaches include implementing the following plans in classrooms, laboratories, residence halls, and offices to mitigate the spread of COVID-19:

1. Education and training through campus-wide signage
2. Protective equipment and supplies for students, faculty, and staff (i.e., facial coverings and hand sanitizer)
3. Daily body temperature screening of all employees and visitors coming to campus
4. Completion of daily health surveys by students
5. Testing for faculty, staff, and students
6. Contact tracing and surveillance
7. Social and physical distancing
8. Moratorium on large in-person meetings and events
9. Rigorous cleaning of facilities and spaces
10. Hand sanitizer stations throughout the campus
11. Controlled access to facilities
12. Quarantine and isolation housing for the students living in residence halls who become ill

Finally, it is important for you to know that, in developing the University’s fall reopening plan, we were guided by our desire to put University stakeholders’ health and safety first; to ensure that our students receive a well-rounded, excellent CAU education regardless of the circumstances; to continue scholarly research; to maintain our program of financial aid; to resume normal operations as safely as possible; and to ensure that we keep the University on a path that enables it to fulfill its academic mission.

It will take the collective efforts of all students, faculty and staff to keep the campus environment as safe as possible by following the health and safety guidelines issued by the CDC and University policies. While the University cannot guarantee that COVID-19 cases will not occur on and around the campus, we will take every reasonable step to maintain the well-being of the entire CAU community to the greatest extent possible.

CAU is indeed fortunate to have wonderful faculty and staff who have worked diligently through this crisis to ensure the University provides an excellent academic experience for our students in the fall and for future semesters.

Please know that this Reopening Plan is for the Spring 2021 semester. With cautious optimism, we hope the spread of the COVID-19 virus will substantially decrease and that all of our students can return to campus for the Spring 2021 semester. For the most up-to-date CAU developments concerning COVID-19 and any adjustments to the Spring 2021 academic calendar, we encourage you to regularly visit the information page we have established on our website.

Thank you for your flexibility in these highly unusual times. Be well, stay safe, and I very much look forward to seeing all of you in the spring.

George T. French, Jr., Ph.D.
President