



July 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope this letter finds you healthy and well! Ordinarily, I open this letter with a hope that you have found a different pace during the summer months and that you have been able to enjoy all things that bring you joy. Somehow such an opener seems inappropriate or disingenuous given the reality of our country and world right now. With so much uncertainty and strife, one could be paralyzed by fear and anxiety, and yet there have been, and continue to be, so many beautiful moments that have emerged. In those beautiful moments, I have found myself reflecting upon the realization that for our country and world to heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually, Clarke's Core Values of Education, Justice, Charity, and Freedom continue to be not only relevant but essential. We are given such a grace and responsibility to welcome each other and new members of our community into both physical and virtual spaces this coming semester and keeping our [Mission and Values](#) in mind will ensure our students' and University's continued success.

Although I am certain that you have been attentive to the official communications about Clarke's responses to COVID-19, I encourage you to refer back to the website's [coronavirus updates](#). Given the significant fluidity of our local, state, regional, and national responses, I encourage you to continue to read your email for updates and, again, refer to the University's website for more information. If you are able, I also encourage you to attend Clarke's COVID-19 virtual Town Hall meeting via Microsoft Teams on July 28, 2020 from 10:30 a.m. to noon (see email from the President's Office dated July 9, 2020). As Thom has communicated, many Clarke employees have worked throughout the summer to attend and respond to the pandemic and plan for a safe return for students and employees. Clarke's strong commitment to community and the Common Good will be important to the continued health and safety of our community's members. I encourage you to also review previous communications from Jody Pfohl regarding expectations for employees as they return to work.

Whereas most employees have been working remotely this summer, the [CU Grounds Crew](#) has continued to create and sustain beauty on our campus. Clarke's [Admissions Team](#) has also been incredibly busy recruiting, facilitating virtual individual and group registration and admissions events, and offering calm reassurance to prospective and new undergraduate and graduate students. Thank you to the Admissions and Financial Aid teams, and to the many faculty and staff who have been incredible partners in the admissions and retention processes! Clarke continues to shine when inviting and welcoming new members into our community.

In some respects, it feels like we have been thinking about the fall semester for the entire summer, and yet ready or not, it is time for me to share the plans for our CU 2020 Conference (formerly known as Opening Workshops) in August. In starting a new tradition, the Faculty

Development Committee has partnered with Staff Assembly to create a schedule of sessions for both faculty and staff, as well as sessions that may be relevant to just staff or just faculty. As you can imagine, with the challenges of gathering together, this conference will look and feel different. Sessions will be presented in virtual format using Microsoft Teams, and a schedule – soon to be released – will provide more details about the presenters and offerings. Generally, you can expect the following to open our academic year, however.

- **Friday, August 14th**, new faculty will participate in a half-day of technology training with Pat Maddux and Colin Muenster.
- **Monday, August 17th**, new faculty members will participate in a full day of New Faculty Orientation activities.
- **Tuesday, August 18th**, will include the official opening of the academic year for the University faculty and staff community, opening remarks by Clarke University's 16th President, Dr. Thom Chesney, and a welcome to all new faculty and staff. The day will continue with various breakout sessions for faculty and staff.
- **Wednesday, August 19th**, will include a keynote presentation by [Jacqueline Battalora](#), author of *Birth of a White Nation: The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today*. Breakout sessions for faculty and staff will continue in the morning and afternoon after the keynote address.
- This year, we will only be providing new professional headshot photos for new faculty and staff. All new faculty and staff will receive an email in regards to scheduling a time for their photo so we can make sure to practice social distancing during this process.

Again, the full CU 2020 Conference schedule and descriptions of breakout sessions will be sent electronically soon and posted [online](#). One tradition that you may notice missing from the bulleted list above, and the schedule when posted online, is the annual Clarke family picnic. Although we long to gather together for this annual tradition, Cabinet has decided to cancel the August picnic date for health and safety reasons. We hope to schedule an in-person family gathering, possibly in the spring, when we can safely come together and celebrate our One Clarke, One Community.

Be sure to look online at the academic calendar for [2020-2021](#) for important dates. As in years past, please note Convocation on Wednesday, September 9th, as the ceremonial opening of the school year for the campus. Classes will be still be dismissed from 10:50 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., but please stay tuned for more information on the logistics of how Convocation will take place this year to ensure health and safety for all involved.

I continue to pray for your health and safety, wish you a wonderful rest of the summer, and look forward to seeing you (virtually or at a safe distance and wearing a mask) in August!

With warmest regards and continued appreciation,



Susan R. Burns, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs