



**VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMICS**

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Dear Colleagues:

This letter arrives to you in the midst of the unimaginable circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope you and yours are safe and well.

This is not a moment for wasting text with a hefty preamble. We have a lot of hard work to do, so I'll be direct. There are four sections to this letter, which is necessarily off script from my customary "welcome back" notices:

- A. Teaching at CBU During the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- B. Supporting Our Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- C. Looking Ahead**
- D. Your New Colleagues and Upcoming Events**

I have endeavored to be both as clear and as concise as possible in what follows. Normally I avoid announcing programs and policies until I am confident they will work. However, there are some initiatives that require the light of day even while they're in development. For these, I welcome your feedback, both directly to me and indirectly through your chairs, directors, and deans. The same invitation applies to your feedback on the rules, policies, and protocols, both new and yet to be defined, as we move into this most unusual academic year. Necessarily, we must continuously take stock of the effectiveness of our approaches to teaching and managing through the pandemic. In addition, our situation remains dynamic and much of what is laid out here may have to be adapted to fit changing circumstances.

**A. Teaching at CBU During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**The Fall Schedule**

The fall schedule has now been substantially overhauled to achieve roughly equal distributions of fully online, hybrid, and traditional instructional methods for our courses. As of this writing over 73% of course registrations are for hybrid or online course sections. I am incredibly grateful for the work put in to complete this important transition. I am especially thankful for the work of the Registrar's Office in this effort. The majority of changes required tedious manual inputs for each class section. They did this without complaint. Give them a virtual hug when you have the chance.

We do have remaining work to do to further de-densify our classrooms. Currently there are 46 class sections listed in traditional format with 16 or more students. We will have to convert these to hybrid or online status, and I will work with the deans and chairs to identify how best to complete this effort. I encourage those teaching any of the 43 sections with 11-15 students to consider further reductions as well.

## Enrollment

As of this morning, we have 301 active first-year deposits, 81 transfer deposits, and 17 returning students. Continuing student registrations across the four schools have stayed near or above 90% retention (all years) throughout the summer. We have approximately 45 first-year students without a registration status, and Admissions and Academic Services are actively working to help these students complete their health forms and remove other barriers to entry. Overall, if the deposits convert to registrations, these figures put us within reach of 95% of our five year averages, which we find incredibly hopeful given the many considerable challenges facing higher education this year. I cannot thank enough the hard working staff in Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Services, and the Registrar's Office for staying laser focused on bringing the fall 2020 cohort onboard.

## Online Instruction

Within online instruction, two modalities are represented on the schedule: asynchronous and synchronous. Each approach has its benefits. Each has its limitations. **Synchronous instruction comes with the added risk of relying on multiple technologies in real time.**

We will support it to the fullest extent possible, but for those of you teaching synchronously, please have backup plans in place for glitches with videoconferencing software and hardware. With respect to the latter, additional resources are on the way. By the beginning of term, we expect to have **25 stand-alone webcams with associated lapel/lavalier microphones**. On backorder, but arriving soon after the start of term, we will be receiving an additional 20 360° conferencing cameras called [Owls](#) and 10 robotic [Swivl](#) systems for smart phones, both of which allow for expanded mobility of the lecturer.

Distribution of these new resources will be managed by the Center for Digital Instruction (CDI). Synchronous and asynchronous instruction may also be supported via desktop and laptop computer, and also by CDI's new production studio in Buckman Hall. This facility was made possible by the gift responsible for our digital education initiative and is intended to support high quality video recording and podcast recording by our faculty. Please [contact CDI](#) for additional information.

Opportunities for online instructional training remain available for the fall, and I have attached my previous announcement of the remunerative support available for those interested in enhancing their skills.

## Laptops Hurray!

**President Shannon** and **Brett Doty**, VP for ITS, have arranged for all full-time faculty to receive a new laptop. We expect these to arrive near the start of term. Two important notes: 1) **you will be able to retain use of your desktop even after getting a laptop**; and 2) priority for laptop distribution will be first to those teaching online, followed by those teaching hybrid. If the first wave of laptops is really sparse, I will prioritize equipping those teaching synchronously. Everyone is getting one, though, as soon as deliveries are fulfilled by our vendor.

These laptops come with a docking station and will replace the desktops you currently have, just not right away.

## Rules and Expectations

Over the summer, much attention was given by your colleagues on the Instructional Subcommittee of the Reopening CBU Advisory Taskforce on preparing for teaching this year in both online and face to face settings. This working group covered a lot of ground—more than I can document here—but I am appending items what were provided by the group or influenced by the group’s recommendations and that can be immediately applied to your courses and course syllabi:

- A sample syllabus with class policies for face-to-face and hybrid courses
- Policies for attendance, mask wearing, and office hours

These will find a home online in the coming days in addition to other policies and protocols. It may also become necessary to revise these policies as offices and processes change. Please note that students will be expected to receive **assigned seats** by their instructors for all face-to-face classes. Assigned places are also recommended, where possible, for labs and group studio work.

As a reminder, please make sure to maintain a record of your **course syllabus in the Canvas shell** built for your course, **even if you don’t intend to teach online.**

There are a few other items related to classroom instruction that need to be noted here. One is that all of the academic **buildings have been marked with directional signage and arrows** to ensure that traffic flows minimize face to face confrontations. These will take some adjustment, and in some cases may be inconvenient, but we will insist that all members of our community **abide by them while classes are in session.** At this point, classroom density has been substantially reduced as a result of the changes on the fall schedule. Therefore, we will begin the fall term with “on time” entrances and dismissals for classes. **Ending class on time is critical to reduce student waiting time in hallways.** Students will be discouraged from congregating in the hallways, and additional between class waiting areas are presently being identified, now that the schedule changes are complete.

We will have **cleaning wipes** available and **kept at school administrative offices.** Specific locations will be shared in a separate communication so that you know where to find these in each building. The same will be true for **emergency-only caches of disposable masks.** Thanks to **Dr. Sean June** and his students, we will have **face shields** available for any faculty or staff member who desires one. Please contact my office if you are interested in obtaining one. Important: **you still have to wear a mask covering your nose and mouth even when wearing a face shield.** Additional cleaning supplies will be available within classrooms and distributed from my office.

If at any point, you encounter issues that our policies and procedures fail to address, please don’t hesitate to express them to me directly, and/or to your chair, director, and dean. If these offices are not best-suited for a response, we will direct you to the ones that are.

## B. Supporting Our Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Separate communications over the coming days will convey the University's actions with respect to student services including COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, temperature and wellness checks, and quarantine solutions for students. These are intended as precautionary actions to mitigate contagion within the CBU community. Our students require numerous additional supports owing to the unique learning and instructional conditions they're facing this year.

### Technology

Almost every CBU student will be engaged in some form of distance learning this semester. This puts a strain on resources, and as we learned last spring and over the summer, some of our students lack reliable equipment or internet access. Thanks to the substantial generosity from members of our community, a [Student Emergency Support](#) program was established to help students manage through a range of challenges including access to adequate technology. Academic Services has been keeping track of technology needed by members of our incoming class, and a renewed "Together and by Association" call campaign is gathering information from our returning students. If any of your students are struggling with technology issues, please consider referring them to the student [emergency request form](#) for assistance.

Campus computer labs have been modified to allow for physical distancing, but the campus' IT infrastructure remains a critical resource for our students. We anticipate increased demand for Wi-Fi access on campus when students are not in class. Spare classrooms will be made available to students as study spaces and as hybrid/synchronous learning spaces. My office is currently monitoring changes on the fall schedule to determine when rooms are free.

### Student Success

In late spring, CBU received a major gift from The Assisi Foundation to support the expansion of Academic Services staffing and IT infrastructure for student success. This is already making a difference to assist our efforts to advise new and returning students, and especially right now, to support [student requests for online-only accommodations](#). Please note that students who have access to campus at the start of term may lose it later on due to COVID-19 quarantine or illness. Please be prepared to assist students remotely even if that is not the primary mode of instruction for the course. Whenever there is a question about a student's need for academic accommodations, please contact [Academic Services](#) or [my office](#).

## C. Looking Ahead

### Retention, Retention, Retention

The Academic Services expansion will also include enhancements of CBU's capabilities for **early intervention and data analytics** geared toward retention and persistence to graduation. The University has now procured [Starfish by Hobsons](#), which will allow us to

capture insights from all areas of university life with which a student engages, including athletics and student services. Implementation is underway.

We are fortunate to have brought on board three new specialists for Academic Services, joining **Justin Bowles, Dr. Johnell Goins, Tee Neely, and Jessica King:**

- **Jackie Herrera**, Advising and Retention Coordinator, DREAMers and Latino Student Success Scholars
- **Sara Nearn**, Director of Academic Support
- **Alaina Peters**, Coordinator of First and Second Year Experience

In addition, **Ciara Williams** has been promoted to Director of Advising. Collectively, this expanded group will provide robust support for the transition to college (including placement), learning accommodations, advising interventions, and support for special student populations. This wonderful and hardworking team is here to assist you, too, and is available whenever you are concerned about a student's progress, challenges, whereabouts, or their need to discern an appropriate major.

Another retention tool now available to us is the [Academy Online Consortium](#). Made possible through our membership in the Council of Independent Colleges, the consortium brings CBU into the world of **online course sharing**. With access to courses requiring the permission of a student's major chair, and course approvals by the chair of the discipline in which a course resides, the consortium functions internally as an off-campus course request. As with our long-standing agreement with Rhodes College, once approved, consortium courses appear on the CBU course schedule and fulfill CBU financial aid conditions. Consortium courses may be chosen to ensure academic progress, improve a student's GPA, and to complete required courses not offered in a given term at CBU. CBU will also soon join the consortium as a teaching institution, allowing non-CBU students to take online courses at partner institutions. We control our partnerships, and I have been in dialogue with the five other Lasallian colleges as prospective partners on this platform. For more information about this resource, I have attached an overview document I shared with Academic Council on July 15.

## **The Academic Calendar**

The early start and early conclusion to the fall semester this year creates a gap in the calendar. Many of you recently heard President Shannon's enthusiasm for the future possibility of a "**Snow-mester**" To be sure, this is an opportunity we are considering. If we're able to make it happen, the aim for this winter term would be to invite faculty to offer attractive online courses that can be completed in an intensive and compact period. At the moment, we are still looking at how to make the calendar work and meet contact hour requirements. Teaching in the program would be **comparable to summer school**, with overload compensations rates to be determined.

Several of you have asked about the spring semester and whether there will be any changes similar to the ones made for the fall. This will likely emerge for discussion after the start of the fall term, and I will request your input on possible options when and if that occurs.

## **A New Building**

Planning and fundraising continues toward breaking ground on a new laboratory building for the Gadomski School of Engineering. This facility will bring much needed laboratory and innovation space to accommodate growth beyond the densely packed confines of Benilde Hall. Dean Faris Malhas and I look forward to having more to share with you about this project in the near future.

### **The Non-Traditional Student**

This year, the College of Adult and Professional Studies will undergo a transformation. We are still early in our planning, but the general vision is to revive appropriate structures for academic oversight and to provide attractive academic programming for the adult undergraduate student. Since 2015, CAPS has served as an independent college at CBU, designed to support non-traditional students through accessible scheduling and hybrid classes. However, enrollments have declined, and synergies between the academic schools and departments have waned. Before this year, the Dean of CAPS reported to Enrollment Management. The present dean, **Dr. Divya Choudhary**, now serves a college that falls completely within Academic Affairs. We're looking forward to working with you on identifying what new programming can be provided to the non-traditional student.

### **Graduate Programs**

Dr. Choudhary's role also includes administrative oversight of CBU's graduate school functions. Let me explain. Each of CBU's graduate programs resides, academically, within one of the four schools. For example, Education is housed in the School of Arts; Computer Information Systems resides in Engineering. The school deans and program directors are responsible for ensuring quality of the faculty hired to teach in the graduate programs and to ensure continuous improvement through institutional effectiveness assessment. Dr. Choudhary's position, by contrast, allows for management of communications and response to issues and needs **common to graduate students and graduate faculty**. She will chair Graduate Council and work closely with Enrollment Management and Communications & Marketing on graduate student recruitment. She will also support efforts to identify and bring forward new graduate programs for approval.

### **Compensation**

With the approval of the Board of Trustees, CBU has retained Casagrande Consulting for a comprehensive diagnostic study of faculty and staff compensation at the University. Initial meetings have taken place with the academic deans and Faculty Assembly leadership. That dialogue will continue throughout the course of Casagrande Consulting's work.

### **ACT/SAT Test Optional Admissions**

Along with **Brian Dalton**, VP for Enrollment Management, I will be leading an effort to explore the possibility of making CBU undergraduate admissions test optional for the incoming fall 2021 cohort. An initial report is in development to bring before Academic Council and the faculty for comment. There are several reasons for considering this move, including those that are mission-based as well as market driven. I do anticipate that,

whatever our approach, it will require greater emphasis on earlier placement assessment for math and writing competencies for students missing scores for those areas.

#### **D. Your New Colleagues and Upcoming Events**

One of the most exciting developments this year is the arrival of seventeen new full time faculty. This is by far the largest cohort of new faculty to begin an academic year at CBU, at least in the fourteen years I have been at the university. There are several factors that have contributed to this circumstance:

- Launching a traditional BSN program, adding three new faculty members.
- Adding two new faculty lines in Art and one in Mathematics.
- Five faculty retirements in 2020.
- A new dean of Engineering and a new associate dean of Graduate Business
- Institutional commitment to fill prior vacancies

Collectively, this incredible group of educators possess a remarkably diverse and impressive range of talents and experiences that mesh incredibly well with CBU's Lasallian mission. In some ways, that only makes more disappointing the fact that we will not convene in community as we normally would to start the year. We are eager to get to know them. However, we will find ways throughout the year to engage with one another and help you discover compatibilities and common interests with your new colleagues.

Here are CBU's newest members of the faculty:

- **Scott Carter**, Assistant Professor and Gallery Coordinator, Visual and Performing Arts
- **Brooke Clemons**, Instructor, Nursing
- **Dr. Pamela Delgado**, Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science
- **Dr. Leonardo Estrada**, Assistant Professor, Biology
- **Dr. Kaitlin Gallagher**, Assistant Professor, Biology
- **Dr. Babu George**, Associate Dean and Professor, Graduate Business
- **Dr. Jacob Goessling**, Visiting Assistant Professor, Literature and Languages
- **Dr. Gavin Johnson**, Assistant Professor, Literature and Languages
- **Dr. Nichole Knox**, Assistant Professor, Nursing
- **Dr. Baris Koprulouglu**, Visiting Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science
- **Alan Caballero LaZare**, Assistant Professor, Visual and Performing Arts
- **Dr. Faris Malhas**, Dean, Gadomski School of Engineering
- **Dr. Lauren Alexis Sage**, Assistant Professor, Nursing
- **Elizabeth Schriener**, Assistant Professor, Physician Assistant Studies
- **Dr. Charles Seeman**, Assistant Professor, Accounting, Finance, Business Law & Statistics
- **Dr. Justin Smith**, Visiting Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science
- **Dr. Frances Turner**, Associate Professor, Management, Marketing, & Economics

We are collecting bios and head shots for a dedicated announcement shortly.

#### **Convocation**

Ordinarily we would be meeting our newest personnel at the annual Community Convocation. This event will now take place virtually. Please hold your calendars open for the **morning of Thursday, August 13**. The agenda is presently in development. Also, keep a lookout for an invitation from Amy Ware and Career Services for a virtual version of their kickoff breakfast early on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Plans for an event to replace Academic Convocation are also underway.

I recognize that this is a lot of content to digest. I hope that it has brought additional clarity to the steps taken and in process for the academic year. I have no doubt that much will continue to change. Thank you for all that you have done to prepare (and shift preparations) to get ready for the fall term. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with your questions, suggestions, and concerns.

I look forward to seeing you and your students in just a few weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Haught".

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