



### ***JACK SHANNON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY***

As the president of Christian Brothers University, it's my privilege and honor to welcome you to our 2020 Community Convocation ceremony. We're doing things a little bit differently this year, given the circumstances that we're all facing these days. This year, instead of gathering in the University Theater, I'm coming to you via a virtual platform. My remarks will be targeted today to what has been happening here on campus the past several months, and perhaps even more importantly, our plans and hopes and ambitions for the coming academic year.

It's been a challenging year for all of us. Since March, our world has been turned upside down. Since then, we've been working actively here at CBU — day-in-and-day-out, hour-by-hour — to make sure that we can continue to deliver a high-quality education to all of our students, as well as maintain the safety and well-being of our campus community. The plans that we've made for the fall semester are now set, and we're moving forward with them with the understanding that we may need to modify them going forward. I want to assure you that the plans have been carefully considered. They've been developed over the past several months in consultation with public health officials and other experts, and purposely tailored to what we need here at CBU. Each university in Memphis has made a decision about what the fall semester will look like for them. Those other universities have made the right decision they believe for their own campus communities. I believe that we have made the right decision for CBU by offering a hybrid model of instruction that includes face-to-face instruction for about 20% of our courses combined with online and remote learning opportunities, and we are reopening our campus residence halls with single person occupancy per bedroom.

Now the key for us is to make sure that we abide by each other's rights and we understand and respect each other's needs as we reopen the campus. So we've created the CBU Compact. It's a document that each of us as a Lasallian community will be signing, and we'll be fulfilling as a commitment to each other. Rightfully, all of us are concerned with the challenges that the pandemic will pose for us this fall here at CBU. Now, I suspect — matter of fact, I *know*, because some of you have reached out to me — that you might have some anxieties or concerns about the course of action that we are about to embark upon.

I want you to know a few things. Number one, I have heard your concerns and listened to them and in response, we've augmented and modified our plans accordingly. And lastly, I will continue to listen to each and every one of you as we make our way together and by



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association here on campus this fall. Since this past March, we here at CBU have set as our top priority, the health and safety and well-being of our Lasallian community as we made the plans for completing the spring semester, and now, as we embark upon our Fall 2020 semester. We've done so also being mindful and attentive to the best interests and the needs of our students. Our plans for the fall semester have been designed purposefully with agility and rapid response in mind, so that we can adjust according to whatever the current pandemic circumstances may present to us. Please know that that agility, that flexibility, that ability to adapt will continue to be at the very forefront of our plans as we move forward this fall.

## ***GRATITUDE & APPRECIATION***

Even in the midst of these very challenging times, I have been both encouraged and energized by the remarkable response of our Lasallian community. I am grateful to all of you for everything that you've done so that we could continue to serve our students and deliver a high-quality education to them. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the contributions that have been made by a number of our colleagues across the campus. Our facilities and grounds and housekeeping staff have done remarkable work since March in keeping this campus going. It's a 24/7/365 proposition, and it requires the commitment of individuals to be here day-in and day-out. That team has been remarkable in the work they've done, and I can assure you that our university campus has never looked better and our buildings have never been better maintained. And overall, we have never been able to deliver a healthier and safer environment for everyone here at CBU.

Since last spring, our Campus Safety team has also been doing incredible work and keeping the campus safe and secure for us. Last spring, our Dining Services team from Aramark did a great job in making sure that our students had the three meals a day that they needed, even after we made the transition to remote learning. They also have been working hard this summer, reconfiguring Alfonso dining facilities to offer safe, social-distance seating. And they've upgraded the menu options that you'll be seeing here on campus this fall. I can't say enough about our faculty as well. In the spring, they made almost a seamless transition to remote learning. Then, this summer, they delivered high quality educational courses completely online. And now, as we enter the fall semester, they've spent the summer preparing with the help of our Center for Digital Instruction to be even more adept at teaching remote and online courses.

I mentioned the folks from CDI, they have done remarkable work as well. They have focused on upgrading our technologies here on campus. With the help of the team from Information



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Technology Services, they have created a wonderful new studio in Buckman Hall to produce additional educational content. And they have been there as a resource to our faculty throughout the spring and the summer to answer any questions or to address any concerns they might have. Now, in the midst of a crisis, one of the most important things is communications and the team from Communications and Marketing have been up to that challenge. They have been consistent in responding to the emergencies that may arise on campus. And, at the same time, have carefully guided us with a thoughtful and strategic plan for communicating out to our campus community.

Everything that's been happening over the course of the summer overall, I'm indebted to the contributions made by my leadership team day-in and day-out, starting with a morning phone call at 8:00 am and then extending well into the night. They've been working hard to make sure that we consider every possible contingency and then make plans accordingly to ensure a safe and responsible reopening of our campus this fall.

Since the pandemic first hit back last spring and throughout the summer, our Board of Trustees has also been there for us. They're a remarkable group of men and women who have provided invaluable counsel guidance and leadership. During these challenging times through weekly phone conversations, as well as individual chats, they have been there as an incredibly important resource, and they continue to do everything that's right by our CBU community.

I'm also very appreciative of the many contributions that have been made during this time by our donors and our alumni. We have a student emergency needs fund that we created this spring. Our donors and alumni have really stepped up to the plate and contributed to that fund as well as many other needs here across the campus, through their support.

We've been able to ensure that all of our students have the technology and the other resources to continue in their education throughout the spring. And now, as we enter the fall, those resources have also been invaluable to us in helping to address the needs of students who unfortunately may have a mother or father who have lost a job as a result of the economic crisis we are also facing these days.

Last but not least, I am so thankful for the presence of the Christian Brothers here on campus. They have been an inspiration to me as well as a steadying voice during a time when I needed it. Most, they have assured me that we are taking the right course of action as we reopen the campus. But, at the same time, they've also asked very important and probing questions as we made those plans because of them. We are here today, 149 years after the



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first Christian Brothers came to Memphis. And because of them, I am confident that we will be here for at least another 149 years as well.

With the arrival of the new year, there are also going to be a number of new faces here on campus. And I like to introduce you to a number of them. Our Gadomski School of Engineering has a new Dean this fall. I want to express my gratitude and appreciation to Pong Malasri for his great leadership of that school for the past six years. I know that he's built a very strong and solid foundation, and it's one that I'm confident we will be able to use to grow the enrollment of the school as well as to continue to elevate its reputation for excellence. Taking the reins from Pong will be Faris Malhas, who's joined us most recently from a time spent as the Dean of a school of engineering in Kuwait. With previous experience at schools such as Central Connecticut State and Bowling Green University, Faris brings with him the international perspective that we need as well as a student-focused orientation that is consistent with our Lasallian mission.

As educators, I look forward to working with Faris and the faculty of the Gadomski School to build an even stronger School of Engineering and to enrich the lives of our students who are there. I am so happy to be welcoming what I'm told to be the largest cohort of new faculty hires in over a decade to CBU. These individuals span all four of our Schools, and they provide an incredible set of talents and experiences and expertise that I know will not only compliment, but reinforce the incredibly talented faculty that we have here currently.

On the Athletics front, we're also fortunate to be welcoming several new coaches to our CBU community. Bre Lewis is our new women's volleyball coach, Enda Crehan is our new men's soccer coach, and Bryan Colbridge is the new coach for our women's and men's club rugby teams. Bre, Enda, and Bryan joined an already exceptional team of coaches here at CBU. The men and women who are in charge of our athletics teams are committed to not only achieving excellent on the athletics field, but also in the classroom as well. This past year, we had a record number of our student athletes achieve honors status, and overall the GPA for the Athletics program reached a record level as well. I'm proud to say that type of academic performance is a hallmark of CBU Athletics.

This year, we're also welcoming four new Christian Brothers to our campus community. Brother Pat Conway joins us as Vice President for Mission and Identity. Brother Martin Montoya will be joining our faculty as well as leading our sustainability efforts here on campus. Both of them will be residing here at the University. In addition, we will be welcoming Brother Alan Parham, the Director of Vocations for the Midwest District of the Christian



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Brothers, and early next year, he will be joined as well by the legendary Brother Joel McGraw, who after retiring from a many-decade career at Christian Brothers High School is taking a well-deserved sabbatical and will be coming back here to CBU in early 2021 to assist us with our Campus Ministry and Advancement work.

## ***STUDENT DEVELOPMENT & CAMPUS LIFE***

Another new colleague is Beth Gerl, who will be joining us in the newly created role of Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life. The work that will be done by Beth and her colleagues in SDCL will be important to the development of our students and providing them with the overall educational experience that they need and deserve. We are looking to enhance student programs as well as provide an overall set of supports for them to ensure that they are successful, not only here at CBU, but as they move forward once they have departed our campus. In a new partnership with OrthoSouth, we will be delivering enhanced health services here on campus, as well as providing expanded physical training and performance training services for our Athletics program and additional resources for the referral of our students, faculty, and staff to medical services, as they might require them as part of those expanded health services. We have also increased the size of our Health Services Center in terms of physical space. Adjacent to the Thomas Center is a modular unit that will allow Heather Harrington and her colleagues from OrthoSouth to be able to provide additional services in a confidential and high-quality manner.

## ***ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT***

Also joining us this fall is Brian Dalton in the role of Vice President for Enrollment Management. I jokingly tell Brian that his title really is Chief Revenue Officer for this university, because without students, quite frankly, we have no work to do. But with students – and the type of talented, ambitious, and driven students CBU has always attracted – we can and have always done very meaningful and important work. Now for Brian, I've already given him a number of goals and objectives to achieve. And I know that he and his team are already busy at work, planning for a successful fall recruitment season, resulting in a very, very healthy and highly qualified class for the coming Fall semester. Now, in terms of numbers, it's a pretty audacious, but I think very necessary, goal that I've given Brian, He and his colleagues, and quite honestly, all of us together, need to recruit 500 first-year, transfer, and returning students to be here at CBU, come the Fall of 2021. Now, why is that important? you might ask. Well, as I said earlier, without students, we have no work. Even more importantly though, is that we need to grow, as I've shared with you in the past, this University to a level of 3000 students, if we are going to be able to be a viable and sustainable



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university that compensates our faculty and staff in a market-responsive manner, and that delivers the array of programs and services that our students deserve.

Now, as the Enrollment Management team recruits that group of 500 students who will be here next fall, I must be candid with you. We do have a number of fiscal challenges that we need to confront and address with the help of our Congressional delegation. We were fortunate to receive \$1.6 million in CARE Act funding from the federal government. Half of that went directly to our students in the form of refunds that allowed them to be able to address their personal circumstances. The remaining \$800,000 has been used by us to deal with revenue losses, as well as added expenses, that we incurred during the Spring semester. Now, unfortunately, that did not fully cover all of those expenses and revenue losses. However, we were also fortunate to receive a Payroll Protection Program loan. I want to acknowledge the incredible work that was done by Ron Brandon and Laura Haddock in getting us not only prepared in submitting an application, but submitting one that was successful on the first round.

Now, many other universities didn't have talented people like Ron and Laura on their staffs. And unfortunately, they were not able to access those Payroll Protection Program resources. But because we did, we were able to avoid layoffs or furloughs of any of our staff over the course of the summer months. I know many of you have expressed appreciation to me and to our Board for that action. And I think that was the right thing to do. It certainly wasn't the easiest thing for us to make happen. But as a result, all of us and our families have been able to enjoy a time when we haven't had to worry about a paycheck. And that's something that I believe none of us take for granted. We all know that at many colleges and universities, including some of our Lasallian colleagues, there has been made the tough choice to have layoffs, furloughs, and reductions in force.

We were able to avoid that, and to Ron and to Laura and to everyone who played a role in our Payroll Protection Program loan, I am thankful and grateful. Even with those resources that I've just mentioned, we still face some challenging times ahead of us fiscally. We have a structural deficit here at CBU. It's nothing new. It's been with us for a number of years. I'm pleased that this past year we were able to work to a budget and actually come in a little bit less than we anticipated in terms of the year's operating loss. However, we all must recognize that if CBU is to continue to serve our students and to be the presence that we are here in Memphis, we need to make some changes.





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As I mentioned earlier, we need to grow our enrollment, and we all need to play our respective roles and ensuring that outcome. We're also going to need to become more efficient in the work we do. That will require us to collaborate and identify ways for us to do the work we do even better and more economically. Last but not least, we need to be more effective. We need to look at ourselves as an organization that serves and serves our students and their families. Well, along those lines, this year, we will be instituting, with the help of our Board members and their respective organizations, a focused initiative on improving customer service. Now, you might ask what this customer service has to do with the University.

I think it's everything, because if we cannot serve our students and their families to the levels that they need and they desire, they have choices. They will go elsewhere. Now, I also recognize that our jobs have not been easy, and they were tough even before COVID hit back last March. But I believe that with those added training resources, as well as a renewed commitment to serving our community, we will be able to make that impact that we need to in the lives of our students and their families, to convince them, first and foremost, to come to CBU and then to stay here to the completion of their degrees. Addressing our fiscal situation will require all of us to work together. It's a shared enterprise and, as such, it requires us to share information with all of you. So in the coming months, I will be meeting with the Faculty Assembly, as well as others across campus, to discuss how we we're going to address our fiscal future, and through Ron Brandon, we also will be sharing updates, giving our fiscal situation as well.

I mentioned a few moments ago, the importance of growing the size of our incoming classes. Equally important is the need for us to improve our persistence and retention rates. Our students are talented, they're ambitious, they're driven, but sometimes they stumble along the way. And when they do, we need to be there to pick them up and get them back on track. With that in mind, I'm announcing that we are launching a Student Success Initiative that will be run out of the President's Office. Why out of my office? Well, because it really involves the entirety of our University. It's not up to one of us to take on the job of student success. It's a collaboration that requires an effort on the part of each and every one of us. Leading our Student Success Initiative will be Jessica King, our Dean of Academic Services, utilizing resources that have been provided to us by the Buckman family.

Along with a recently secured \$500,000 grant from the Assisi Foundation, we're building out an entire program focused on the success of our students. I'm pleased to say that we began focusing on this very important part of our work at CBU last year with a pilot initiative



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targeted to our first-year students. That work has paid dividends already that are demonstrable and are very important to note this past year. Our first-year students have enrolled for Fall classes at the rate of 80.4%. That persistence rate is the second highest that we've been able to achieve for that group of students within the last decade. And it's 600 basis points over and above our performance the year prior. Improved retention results are going to generate more resources for the work we do. Even more importantly, I believe it fulfills our moral obligation that we have to each of our students, once they've been accepted to CBU, to ensure that they graduate within a four-year period,

This coming year, there will be a renewed focus on our Communications and Marketing efforts. As many of you already know, we recently launched an exciting new website for CBU. It's much more user-accessible, as well as faster. And I think it's also going to be an incredibly effective tool for telling the CBU story. Telling the CBU story is an imperative us each and every one of us. Many times, I hear from people just how wonderful CBU is, about how it was great for them as a student, or perhaps as a family member or some friend or neighbor, in terms of the education and the experience they were provided. The problem is, when you talk about Christian Brothers here in Memphis, more people think that you're talking about the high school. Now, they do great work as well. And I want to acknowledge the partnership we have with Brother David Poos and his colleagues at CBHS. But in all deference to them, it's time that people understood that there's another Christian Brothers in town – CBU, and we do equally great work in serving the needs of our community and our students.

So to be more effective in telling our story, we've implemented a new model for Communications and Marketing here at the University. Leslie Graff, in her role as Vice President for Communications and Marketing, is taking the lead in coordinating all of our efforts across the campus. And that's going to mean some changes. That means, for example, that all of our marketing and advertising will be centralized within Leslie's division. It also means that for those of you who have gone out and purchased stress balls and special branded tablets or other tchotchkes, we're not going to be doing that any longer. What we are going to be doing is ensuring that you have those resources and others, but they will be centralized out of Communications and Marketing to ensure high quality products –and also the very best pricing possible – to expand our communications reach this year. We also will be relaunching the University magazine. We'll be doing two editions a year, and it's designed to tell the stories of the great work being done here on campus, by our students, our faculty, our staff, and our coaches, and to also update alumni with what's happening in the lives of





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their classmates. Finally, this being the age of Twitter, Instagram, and so many other social media platforms that, quite honestly, I can never keep track of, we will put a renewed focus on ensuring that our story is told through social media as well

## ***NEW & UPGRADED FACILITIES***

Now I've spoken about people and programs and resources, and perhaps the most important of our resources are our physical facilities here on campus. We've made a number of upgrades over the course of the summer, and we'll be continuing to do so throughout the course of the academic year. We've constructed a brand new studio for our Center for Digital Instruction on the third floor of Buckman Hall. This state-of-the-art facility, even though not large, is exceptional in terms of the resources it will provide our faculty in further enhancing and elevating the quality of our online courses here at the University. We are also finalizing plans for a new modular facility that will provide both classroom as well as exam space for our Nursing and Physician Assistant programs. We have also continued forth with the planning for our new Engineering building, and provided that we can raise the necessary funds, we hope to be able to break ground for that exciting new campus addition sometime in late spring or early summer.

This fall, we will be completely redoing our softball field here on campus. It's had a number of drainage issues, and quite honestly, it hasn't been the best of playing surfaces for our student athletes. So we'll be investing resources to upgrade that facility for them. In addition, within Canale Arena, we'll be repurposing the Skybox facility to make it more of a multipurpose space. We will be adding an office location for our academic advisor for our now nearly 280 student athletes here on campus, as well as installing a wheelchair lift to make that space ADA accessible.

During the course of the coming year, we also will be making upgrades to the technology that exists within our classrooms and other spaces. We will continue planning for a new space for our AutoZone Center for Community Engagement, to allow for more community participation and events to occur here on campus.

We also will be finalizing plans for a new Student Success Center here on the campus. It will combine Academic Services, Career Services, and other student-serving offices in a way that will provide, we hope, an even higher level of services to our students. This type of shared and adjacent space will also strengthen and reinforce the collaboration that is necessary for student success.



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We also will be addressing the relative inaccessibility of our campus. Our campus is a beautiful one, but quite frankly, it is inaccessible to far too many of our students, our faculty, and our staff. We need to ensure that this is a ADA-compliant campus in all respects. So, as a first step in ensuring that outcome, we will be doing an audit, from an accessibility perspective, of the campus beginning this fall.

Lastly, we are overdue for a campus plan. Our individual buildings and spaces are wonderful by themselves, but we need more of a vision of how they work together. And more importantly, how they will serve our University and our students going forward. I'm pleased to tell you that, shortly, we will be acquiring the vector control property from Shelby County, and we need to make plans for the eventual reuse of that very sizeable and immediately adjacent property. In addition, we need to spend some time thinking about the Avery Avenue access point, along with all the other gateways to our campus, as part of a thoughtful, collaborative, and engaged process that will take place over the course of the next year. I'm confident that not only can we plan for that future, but make even better and more appropriate use of the already great spaces and buildings that we have.

## ***TOGETHER WE RISE***

These are incredibly challenging times, with the global pandemic just being one of the many issues that we are confronting as a Lasallian community. Now, more than ever, we need to be there for each other together. We must make the humanity-affirming statement that Black Lives Matter as Lasallians. We recognize the importance of each and every life as we work, day-in and day-out, in service of that core value. However, at this point in our history, we also need to do more than just that – we are compelled to affirm that Black Lives Matter. Our Black colleagues are suffering and imperiled. We must stand with them and walk alongside them during their journey. They need to hear from us that we are with them and that we are walking alongside them in their journey together. We must make the humanity affirming statement that the dream is alive.

Our Dreamers bring diversity and so many other things to our campus community, but they're under siege. Even with the recent Supreme court decision, they live anxious lives, filled with uncertainty as to whether they will be able to stay within our country. We need to be alongside them in their journey as well, together. We must make the life-affirming statement that you are not alone. Our LGBTQ+ community feels welcome here at CBU. And I take great pride in that. However, the world is not a very friendly or hospitable place to them. Still. We need to be walking alongside them in their journey together. We must make the humanity-affirming statement that together we rise. Our diversity is special here at CBU. Our inclusivity



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is what makes us the place we are. We need to continue to recognize that differences are something to be embraced.

We need to continue to reach out to each other during this time of the pandemic, perhaps now more than ever. Lasallian values are what will change this world for the better. So, this coming year, I look forward to working with each and every one of you, as we continue the important work we are doing. We have served Memphis and our students for nearly a century and a half. This year will be a challenging one, perhaps unique in the history of our University. However, harking back to the original Brothers that came here to Memphis in the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire, working in challenging circumstances is not new for us here at CBU. So, with hope and optimism and faith, I believe that we will make it not only through this coming year, but we will do so with great outcomes and much positivity. So, on behalf of myself, the Board of Trustees, and our larger campus community, let's have a great year. Let's make the most of it together. And by association.

St. John Baptist de La Salle, pray for us. May Jesus live in our hearts, forever.

## ***PAUL HAUGHT, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMICS***

Good morning. My name is Paul Haught. I'm Vice President for Academics at Christian Brothers University. Welcome to this year's Community Convocation. A little bit about me. I've been at CBU now for 14 years and entering my sixth year as Vice President for Academics. Many of you have known me for a while in various roles at the University. I'm a Philosophy professor by background and have been involved in a number of our academic programs, including including the PA program.

One thing that's of primary importance for me in setting the tone for this semester is thinking about the circumstances of our students. One, there are two real characteristics that really stand out among our students that I want us to be thinking about. One is what we've observed all summer long, which is that as they've been in touch with our Orientation guides and our Academic Services team, Admissions, and many of the faculty, there's been a consistent theme of exuberance. These are students – especially thinking of the freshmen class whose high school year was ruined like no other high school senior year has been – they're really thirsty for contact, for engagement, for coming back to a community, even if it's online. We're sensing that engagement, that thrill of being back together in an academic environment.



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And so, that really gives me a lot of reason to be encouraged about the coming year. This is a group that we're really poised to serve very well, because they're ready for us to teach them. They're prepared to learn.

Having said that, one other characteristic that really stands out to me, for which we need to be prepared, is the fact that the students are going to need your support. They're going to need this, especially through your consistent engagement, with where they are in their learning at different stages throughout the term. So we are teaching in a variety of modalities this semester. And so, in some cases, some of you will be seeing students on campus on a regular basis. Many of you are teaching online, and it's really important in those circumstances that you're paying attention to their participation in the learning experience, that you've set up for them. And that you're alerting other folks on campus who are going to be your allies in their learning experience to support them through their journey. And so, having said that again, keep this in mind: That your students are really excited about being here this year, thrilled to be back in this learning environment. However, they're also going to need extra attention so that they're able to navigate these uncertain waters that we're treading through this year.

So, how best do we support our students?

I think the key disposition for this semester is to be prepared, to be flexible. One thing that we've done, in preparing for this year, is we've very much reduced the population of students on the campus. And so we've done that with your help, with your assistance in being adaptive to the very, the circumstances that have continued to change throughout the summer, and that we can expect to continue to change throughout the year. As a result, over 80% of our classes at this moment are offered in hybrid format or online.

Thank you for your flexibility. I know this was hard work for both the faculty and the Registrar's Office and many others on campus, to prepare and communicate these changes to our course schedule for the fall.

But in other ways, we need to be flexible as well. One asset that has helped us to be prepared for needing to accommodate the circumstances that we're going to be facing this semester is the Digital First Initiative provided by the Instructional Subcommittee for the university Task Force for Reopening the University.

What this digital first framework allows is for all of us to be flexible, and to be able to pivot to the use of distance educational technology for continuing and sustaining our classes. Again, keep in mind that there may be days when a student cannot attend class that's been in hybrid



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or traditional format, but now that student is in quarantine. Similarly, there may be the need – I hope there is not, but there may be the need for a classroom to be shut down for 48 hours. And in those circumstances, if you're using that traditional format, you will need to adapt your teaching to reach your students for that period of time.

Fortunately, we have done a lot of work throughout the summer to prepare our Center for Digital Instruction, our ITS department, and many other departments on campus to service the faculty and to service our students for these periods, these episodes of discontinuity throughout the semester. I'm asking the faculty and staff to be prepared, to be flexible this year. I do want to acknowledge that the pressures of remote instruction, of remote work, have a disproportional burden on different members of our community.

In particular, those of us who have responsibilities as caregivers are put in a spot, in a particularly hard place at times, to balance the needs of staying on top of classes and having other assignments. And so we do know that these circumstances, they tax all of us, but they do place an added burden on those who are caring for others in their households and in their communities. We're grateful for that. We want to support that, that's in our mission. I also want to note, especially for faculty and especially for our junior faculty, that if you have concerns that are being placed on you because of caregiving requirements, that I will work with you, your Deans will work with you, on your pursuit of tenure promotion at CBU. I wanted that to be clear that we were aware that these are unusual circumstances. They do place extra burdens on all of us.

In some cases, those burdens are especially strong at times and require a careful and sometimes difficult-to-accomplish balancing of work and life. So, one critical message for everyone to take in this semester has to do with wearing a mask. It's essential to wear one on campus. I happen to be in a closed environment right now, but otherwise, every day, I'm wearing a mask in all public places on campus. Please also wear your mask properly. It's absolutely the one consistent thing that we can all do to prevent the spread of coronavirus on our campus.

I'm very pleased this year to welcome 17 new faculty members into the CBU community. This is a remarkable group of colleagues that we're really thrilled to have on our campus. They bring with them a diverse array of skills, but also a number of common elements that fit so well with our mission and with our community. And so I'm thrilled that they're here, they belong to a number of departments.



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We do have this fall the launch of our traditional Nursing program, and so we have three new faculty in that department. In addition to Nursing, we're going to welcome new faculty this year in Literature and Languages, Biology, Mathematics, Accounting, Visual and Performing Arts, Marketing and Management, and PA Studies. In meeting with each of the new faculty throughout the recruiting process. I was very impressed with our uniform commitment to the Lasallian mission and their creativity in how they approach their teaching.

These are going to be wonderful members joining the CBU family, and I'm thrilled to work with all of them. As will you throughout this academic year.

As you heard from President Shannon, CBU has made considerable investments in student success. These are particularly in the areas of specialized advising, where we'll be able to support special populations of students like we've never been able to do before. This is critical because CBU supports a broad diversity of students from all kinds of circumstances. And now we're specially fit to support our students according to their circumstances and needs.

In addition, these investments will support use of data. Like we've never been able to do before, as many of you have already heard and have been part of the selection process. We're bringing aboard a retention and student success system called Starfish. This will allow us the ability to intervene early, to support our students, and really to understand what the drivers are for their persistence at CBU or for their failure to do so.

We're not perfect. We are doing well this year in terms of student retention, but we can do even better. And this is what this investment will do. It'll pay off. And in retaining students, one asset that the University has, that has been essential in helping us navigate the challenges of pandemic. has been the Center for Digital Instruction. As we've built out the Center for Digital Instruction, it has become possible to imagine different kinds of program deliveries and course delivery modalities that were really commonplace on this campus more than a year ago. So, as we think about flexibility, we're also going to be thinking about that in times that are less fraught with peril and more times that are opportunities for us to grow.

I want to thank several departments for their hard work and preparing us for the Fall 2020 semester. In particular, I'm thankful for the heroic efforts of Academic Services in orienting our first-year students to CBU. Let me also thank the Registrar for the changes they've had to make frequently to the fall schedule. To the members of the CDI team, I don't know how we could have done any of this without you. I want to thank the team in Student Development and Campus Life for all that you have done to prepare our students for a safe residential experience this fall. I also need to recognize Connie Beck for switch-hitting between Welcome





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Weekend preparation and her new role as Honors Director. Thank you, Connie. Also grateful for our team members in Admissions and Financial Aid, and many other offices on campus who have prepared the campus for the start of the Fall term. I really want to thank all of the faculty who have shared with me your concerns, your ideas, your hopes, your fears about the Fall semester. You've reminded me, over and over again, who we serve and how we best serve them. Thank you.

We're all hyper aware of the challenges of running a university during pandemic. But, in addition to that, we still have to run the ordinary operations of a university, including accreditation. We have two site visits in September. One of these is for the Physician Assistant Studies Program. We also have a visit from our regional accreditor, SACCCOC, the final week of September. We have continued our preparations from the scheduled visit from March of this year. It has now been postponed as a virtual visit, but it will happen in September. And we're thankful for all of the work and documents supplied by all of our departments to prepare for this important visit.

Early in 2020, we convened a group of faculty and staff to reflect on what new programs we should be considering to grow the University. This occurred obviously before the pandemic, but that work has continued and will continue through the current year.

Based on the feedback of that group, we know that there are opportunities for the College of Adult Professional Studies, for our graduate programs, for distance education, and for a number of other initiatives that fit the mission and will allow us to better serve the Memphis community. The COVID-19 pandemic has not been the only news event that has caught the attention of our community. There will also be opportunities this year to enhance diversity and inclusion in our curriculum. And I look forward to working with the Faculty Assembly on how best to achieve that end with so many creative and talented members of the CBU community. I look forward to seeing what comes out of our collaboration

## ***CLOSING REFLECTION***

Years ago, when I made the transition into an administrative role on the campus, I had to make a decision about what this work meant for me. At the time, I was deeply invested in the academic and research work I was doing, and I still am. But I also knew at that time that I also had different responsibilities and a different kind of accountability to this community that I did simply to improve my abilities as a Professor of Philosophy. So, when I accepted the invitation to serve the community as an administrator, it was important me to envision it in particular terms. Since that day I became a department chair and ever since, I've thought



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about my work as creating an environment and creating the conditions to make CBU a University where I would thrive as an educator. But it wasn't just about me, and thinking about this work, I was thinking about every educator on campus.

And so it's been an absolute joy and pleasure, a challenge at times, but a thoughtful exploration and shared adventure with the faculty to learn about their strengths, to learn what makes teaching work – work successfully – in their disciplines. Obviously COVID-19 has added a different dimension to that challenge, to that need to find out how to be successful as a Lasallian educator at CBU. I do hope that every member of this campus, whether as a faculty member or on the staff, is thinking about what they can do to create the conditions for a thriving Lasallian community of educators. I'm very proud to serve this University. I'm very proud and thrilled about the opportunity to work with the new members of our community who are coming aboard this year. This is truly a special place. And despite our challenges, we all know that we're going to be able to thrive beyond this.

We know that every day this year, we're going to be confronted with the circumstances that worry us, that concern us, that make us think of how fatigued we are in the work that we're trying to accomplish. But I do hope that every member of the faculty and staff also consider what I considered years ago, which is what they can do to create the conditions for CBU to become a thriving Lasallian community. I need to be honest with you. This work has been really hard, preparing for this Fall term. Not just for me. I know it's been for all of you. But remember we're in this together, Lasallians operate by the principal of “together and by association.” We take this to mean that, even in these moments of hardship, we find ways to bridge our differences, to dialogue together, to include one another in conversation, and asking the hard questions, and to carry the university's mission forward.

Again, it's been a joy to serve you. It will continue to be a joy to serve you. This is going to be an academic year unlike any other, but I look forward to rising to the challenge with all of you.