

## **Special Message**

August 13, 2020

Dear Norfolk State University Community:

It is my hope that each one of you and your loved ones are safe and well.

In the past six months, we have all faced challenges not seen before in a century. Each day, COVID-19 brings new and unprecedented challenges, which require innovative solutions. At times, the uncertainty surrounding this pandemic can be both frustrating and unsettling.

Nevertheless, we are a resilient community and have risen to meet these challenges. The Commonwealth of Virginia made great strides in reducing the number of positive COVID-19 cases, and we have begun reopening our economy and looking forward to the fall semester.

NSU is rapidly adjusting to this new normal and making operational decisions on a timeline that reflects the fluid nature of this pandemic.

The University has worked diligently in the past several weeks toward a safe fall reopening. The success and well-being of each NSU community member is of paramount concern. For this reason, NSU's reopening plan focuses on protecting the health and safety of our community, while also ensuring continuity of operations at a level that meets our commitment to educational excellence. While it is impossible to anticipate every risk, please know that the University is adhering to prevailing public health mandates and guidelines, such as masking, social distancing, sanitization, in an effort to limit exposure to COVID-19 on our campus. Additionally,

we are following the [NSU Fall Campus Reopening Plan](#), submitted to and certified by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

The coronavirus demonstrates that the environment is constantly changing. We are closely monitoring surges in positive infections across the nation. In response to these conditions and in concert with our commitment to test every student who comes on campus and to offer testing to every faculty and staff that comes to campus, NSU is partnering with Thermo Fisher Scientific and Howard University to implement our testing protocol for which there will be **no cost** for testing, materials, transport, analyses, and results.

Thermo Fisher Scientific, a world leader in serving science, has established testing programs in 40 U.S. states with over 280 labs, and has shipped over 40 million COVID-19 tests nationwide. Through "[The Just Project](#)" initiative, named after pioneering biologist Ernest Everett Just, Thermo Fisher has made plans to donate \$15 million in diagnostic instruments, test kits and other medical technologies. This initiative will also provide technical support to several HBCUs planning to implement on-campus COVID-19 testing throughout the 2020-21 academic year. NSU will be one of the first HBCUs to partner, as a "spoke" institution, with Thermo Fisher Scientific to accomplish the goal of providing COVID-19 tests to the campus community. Working with Howard University to process NSU COVID-19 tests in their state-of-the-art laboratories, NSU is currently in the process of finalizing and formalizing the collaboration between our two great institutions.

This partnership with a well-established, leading scientific firm and a premier historically Black research university reflects NSU's commitment to excellence and community. We anticipate this

relationship to produce lasting fruit long after this crisis ends. Furthermore, NSU is also collaborating with the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (CHKD) to provide initial testing for a select number of students and NSU is currently in discussion with Fort Norfolk Medical Associates to plan for additional COVID-19 testing capacity.

Based on these circumstances, and to protect the health and safety of everyone as much as we are able, we are **delaying the fall return to campus. Although the semester will begin as scheduled on August 26, faculty and students will remain off campus.** The following measures will be implemented:

- **Online delivery of class instruction for the first two weeks of the 2020 Fall**

**Semester.** NSU will deliver instruction online and remotely for the first two weeks of the Fall Semester of 2020. The delay in bringing all students back for classes affords us the time to align new and necessary resources with our reopening plan. We realize this situation particularly impacts courses that will be taught in face-to-face and in-person blended formats and considered multiple options to avoid this delay. Unfortunately, changing conditions and the need to meet our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our community demands that we start classes in virtual formats. During this period, faculty with in-person and in-person blended courses will deliver courses in remote formats. Faculty should record and make class sessions available so that students can access them asynchronously. We appreciate your patience and flexibility in meeting this schedule change.

- **Return to campus.** Students will begin a phased return to campus on August 29, 2020 with first year students arriving on campus between August 29 and September 1. This modified date of return is just one week after the original planned return date of August 22. Returning students will arrive between September 2 and September 7. Specific dates of arrival will be provided to students based on their housing assignment. **Please note that all students will be tested for COVID-19 upon arrival.**
- **COVID-19 Testing.** Our reopening plan calls for testing every student. It also includes the opportunity to test every faculty and staff member who comes on campus. With the high demand for COVID-19 testing and the resulting testing resource shortages, NSU has fought hard to make sure we are able to provide this important tool as another means of helping to keep our community safe and healthy. Our partnership with Thermo Fisher Scientific and Howard University will facilitate a sound, timely, and reliable testing protocol, supplemented by the COVID-19 tests made available by CHKD, and potentially Fort Norfolk Medical Associates. We anticipate beginning testing on August 29, one week after the original planned date of August 22.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are excited and prepared for the return of our student population to campus. NSU will continue to provide academic instruction and administrative services at a level of excellence. We understand that this delay may be difficult for some of you, as we were all looking forward to a return to campus sooner. The uncertainty is difficult, but your ability to be flexible through this challenging period has been amazing.

We look forward to a productive and successful semester. Together, WE CAN AND WILL DO THIS!

Should you have any COVID-19 related questions or concerns, they may be addressed to the Director of the COVID-19 Project at [COVID@nsu.edu](mailto:COVID@nsu.edu).

BEHOLD!

Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston  
President  
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