



# OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY

GOD FIRST!

## *President Pollard's Message to the Oakwood Family June 15, 2020*

Greetings from your Oakwood University!

We trust that you are well and safe. Oakwood University continues to operate during this global pandemic in a way that limits the number of employees physically working on campus, as well as restricting our face-to-face contact. We have not reopened the campus for general access and egress. Our employees continue to serve our constituents from the safety of their remote home environments.

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, on February 23, I appointed a 40-person team of faculty, staff, administrators, and students (divided into 12 subcommittees). This team was established to provide continuous monitoring of the pandemic environment and to make recommendations designed to safeguard the health and safety of our campus populations. The group, known as the University Responsiveness Taskforce, was also assigned the work of converting classroom-intensive delivery to remote online learning, and to implement teleworking capacities in our workforce. Their final work was to guide the University's readjustments to 'the new normal' required by the pandemic. While the following determinations are only samples of the Taskforce's work, the deliberations coming forward across the last 100 days have resulted in the following decisions:

***The decision to conduct a 2020 graduation ceremony*** — We will begin the 2020-2021 academic year with the Commencement exercises for the graduating class of 2020 on Saturday, August 1 at 8:00 p.m. in the Von Braun Center. The graduation celebration this year will no longer include the pinning and dedication ceremonies, parents' dinner, Consecration or Baccalaureate services. The Commencement Planning Committee made this recommendation to administration in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to maximize the safety of our graduates, parents, faculty, staff, students, and the Oakwood community. In working with the Von Braun Center, safety protocols have been implemented, including reducing seating capacity from 10,000 persons to 2,300 attendees. Such a reduction will facilitate social distancing. Further details regarding Commencement 2020 will be forthcoming and will be available in the graduation portal of the University website.

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***The decision to safely reopen for the Fall Semester, 2020*** — The University is currently planning to fully reopen our campus on August 1. As you recall, during the Spring semester, Oakwood University suspended all face-to-face instruction and most face-to-face operations. Our summer instruction, as has been the case for the past several years, remains online. However, over the past several months, we have been planning with intentionality how to protect the health of our campus community when the institution fully reopens in August.

As an institution, we have already taken many important measures that are in line with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Alabama statewide health orders. Some of these measures include: enhanced and increased cleaning and sanitization protocols; plexiglass shield installation; social distancing and the wearing of face masks; temperature checks; reduced class sizes; facility reconfiguration and space management; large group size gatherings and limitations; carryout meals; academic calendar modifications; contact tracing and testing options; and the de-densifying of residence halls, as well as other living and learning spaces. We have also contracted with a third-party provider of hygienic products, personal protective equipment, and sanitization stations that will be strategically placed and maintained across our campus. Our plans to reopen continue to be dependent on the condition of the pandemic in the State of Alabama, the region, and our nation.

The Fall 2020 semester will be clearly different from our previous Fall semesters. The safety of our campus community will be the determining factor for our decisions. The 'new normal' will affect everything from how we conduct intramurals to how we stagger dining hall entry. While we could not place everything in one letter, you should know that the University will continue to identify medically-appropriate measures for the protection of the most vulnerable and those at greater risk within our campus community.

We will continue to update you more frequently as we approach Graduation 2020 on August 1, New Student Orientation for Freshmen and Transfer students on August 5, and the beginning of classes on August 10. Also, please know that we have truncated the Fall semester to end immediately before Thanksgiving (November 24) and to resume classes after the New Year, January 6, 2021. Please continue to check the university COVID-19 page for additional details at <https://www2.oakwood.edu/oakwood-university-coronavirus-covid-19-update/>.

Please continue to keep us in prayer as these important decisions come before us.

Very sincerely,



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President, Oakwood University  
June 15, 2020

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