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Monday, August 24, 2020

Greetings VSU Family,

After careful consideration and many shared governance conversations, Virginia State University has made the difficult, but necessary decision, to remain fully online for the remainder of the fall 2020 semester. In addition, students will not move onto campus beginning next week as originally scheduled.

Earlier this month, VSU began the first four weeks of instruction in an online/remote format. Students were scheduled to transition to on-campus housing beginning September 2, 2020 and to some face-to-face instruction on September 14, 2020. The schedule was to allow time to provide at-home COVID-19 testing for all VSU students, faculty, and staff prior to their return to campus.

The VSU administration revisited the topic after a number of universities across the country reopened and were then forced to go fully online after major campus COVID-19 outbreaks. This is evidence that we cannot prevent widespread transmission of COVID-19 between students if we allow them to return to campus.

We have worked tirelessly to prepare for the safe return of our students. We are fully prepared to welcome them back to our campus; however, we have determined that the implications and risks of returning to campus in the midst of this growing pandemic could potentially have harmful or even deadly ramifications.

VSU serves a population that is at higher risk of COVID-19. More than half of all cases and deaths are in the black community. We recognize that despite our heartfelt efforts, meticulous planning and precise preparations, this virus is relentless.

There is a slight possibility that this trend could reverse itself, but making this decision now prevents the additional inconvenience of a last minute decision. Moreover, it is necessary to prevent the massive disruption that could be caused by the need for an abrupt shutdown after our students are already on campus.

We know that this news is disappointing for our Trojans who desire to return to our vibrant on-campus atmosphere. VSU remains committed to providing a quality, transformative, and engaging educational experience in fall 2020. In addition, we will provide opportunities, resources, and activities to virtually engage our Trojans throughout the semester. We will ensure that our students continue to enjoy the experiences of being a Trojan.

I would like to thank all of the VSU faculty, staff and administration who have worked tirelessly over the past six months on a plan to safely move our students "*Forward in Fall 2020.*" You did

incredible work, and you did everything right. But, COVID-19 is a formidable opponent and it has presented circumstances that are far beyond our control.

We recognize that this decision could potentially present a number of challenges for VSU, including financial impacts, going forward. While we considered this, our driving force remains prioritizing the health and safety of our Trojan Family and protecting the legacy of VSU.

Students, we will be in touch with you very soon to share information about housing/dining and other business related updates resulting from this change to our Fall Reopening Plan.

Trojan Family, we will work through this **together**. We will get through this **together**. **Together**, we are Trojan Strong.

Hail State!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, sweeping strokes that form a stylized, abstract representation of the name.

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