

Addendum to our Open Letter about Fall 2020

We are writing again on behalf of the Augusta University (AU) Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). We are addressing Provost Caughman and Chief of Staff Keen as the two Project Leaders for the AU Reopening initiative tasked by the University System of Georgia (USG). Last week, we sent out an open letter requesting policy changes and additional information about the Reopening Plans for the Fall 2020.

Since then, we received a few messages from our colleagues at the College of Nursing in Athens (CON-Athens). These conversations reflected the need for specific Reopening plans that take into consideration the different circumstances of our satellite campuses. We are making these additional comments and requests. We want to work with the administration to ensure conditions for the reopening of our campuses are as safe as possible.

The example of AU's College of Nursing in Athens highlights the potential issues our Students, Staff, and Faculty at our satellite campuses may face. For example, our students at the CON in Athens lack resources. Although undergraduate students in the CON-Athens campus pay UGA fees and therefore can use both the Counseling Center and the Health Center there, our graduate students and our Clinical Nurse Leader prelicensure students cannot. They are almost two hours from Augusta University's resources. This situation creates a non-equitable experience for our students in CON-Athens. It would be a problem even during normal times, and it is a greater problem during a Pandemic.

So we are making these additional requests

1. The University must find a solution to have reliable broad testing available for Faculty, Staff, and Students in CON-Athens. Provost Caughman's statements at the last Town Hall included mention of utilizing the Richmond County health department as the primary provider that would be involved in responding to any contact tracing needs that might arise from a faculty member who tests positive. By extension, we additionally request that our reopening plan include a similar plan involving the Clarke County public health dept.
2. We also ask that the University Leadership make specific plans for every satellite campus to ensure everyone in our AU community in Augusta and outside of Augusta are as safe as possible.

As other USG institutions have done, next week we will circulate a petition consolidating our requests for a safe Reopening Plan for the Fall of 2020 and ask for signatures from both AAUP members and from non-members. We are all in this together.