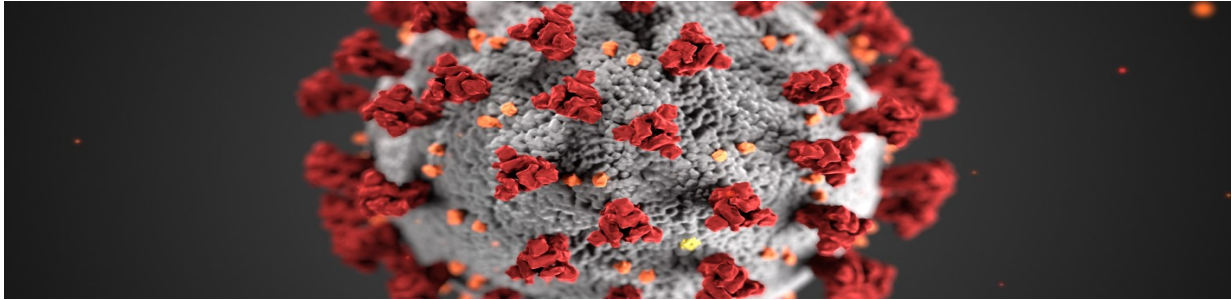


# Documenting the AUC Response to COVID-19 Collection



April 22, 2020

## **Kanika Bell, Clark Atlanta University**

“My students have just frankly been through it all this school year at CAU. We started school a day late because a student was shot in front of the library and the first day of classes needed to be used as a vigil. Then another one of our students was brutally murdered by the hands of another student, her very best friend. Then a pandemic eliminated the entirety of their semester. All of the research conferences, the study abroad experiences, the graduation, the associated family and friends events, senior week, pledging, I could go on and on. I will say that I came to know my students on a deeper level during this time. Some don't have loving parents to whom they could retreat. Some don't have computers or reliable internet access. Some slept in the library or in their cars during the school year. Some were in recovery and this almost caused a relapse. Some were so afraid...so very, very afraid of getting sick or coming back to school to find that their favorite older professor had passed away. Many miss the personal interaction in class. I miss it too. I never thought I would yearn to hear the murmur of students during class. That sound that normally call the class to attention in stern reminder of the requirement of silence, is missing from my classes now. Some of them had best friends and romantic partners from across the country. School was how they could be together. They feel isolated and separated. I must say that Dr. French's response to this event has been impressive. He has addressed the masses with compassion in situation that required decisive and immediate leadership. The students were so angry. They asked in droves how CAU could cancel their graduation...not yet grasping the global nature of this event. So I held discussions about it in class. No one on earth is having a graduation ceremony in May. It isn't personal. We went from joking in class about someone coughing to literally fearing someone being less than six feet from us. They said that it helped to have a discussion about it. I forgot several things in my office I needed before the quarantine. I didn't realize the last time I was in my building would be the last time for a while so I didn't bring home things I needed for the rest of the semester. I felt like I was sneaking to campus. Sneaking into my own building and into my own office. Rushing to make it back home as my city was on a curfew. The hallway was empty not just because people weren't there but because the school had been abandoned. There are COVID-19 signs everywhere but no signs of humans. It felt like a sci-fi movie. I am also a Spelman alum. We celebrated founders' day on April 11 and there were numerous virtual events to bring sisters together. Convocation was a medley of past convocations. There were pieces of speeches that were chillingly prophetic. As it was live you could type in thoughts. I cried several times. Mainly when a sister from the class of 2020 spoke out about their emotions around this and the overwhelming nurturing responses from sisters all over the world committed to ensuring that 2020 Spelmanites feel inducted into the fold. Spelman alums everywhere participated in social media challenges to stay connected to one another. Monies have been raised by AUC alums to provide travel and housing funds to stuck students, PPE for AUC alum health professionals working directly with COVID-19 patients, and countless video messages have been posted in

support of AUC family members directly impacted by this crisis. What I truly, truly hope...is that this event increases AUC resolve to be active participants in political spheres.”