

## *A Message from the President*



As we complete the 2019-2020 academic year, marked both by historic growth and opportunity for Tougaloo and unprecedented challenges presented by the coronavirus (COVID-19), we are receiving many questions about the College's plans for our next academic year. The COVID-19 pandemic has left institutions of higher learning leaders facing difficult decisions about when to reopen their campuses and how to effectively achieve it.

Tougaloo is taking steps to return students, faculty and staff to the campus in the months ahead following recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as state and local executive orders. In order to accomplish this, we have activated two COVID-19 task forces working in consultation with the President's Executive Cabinet: one focusing on *preparing students* and one *preparing employees* to effectively return to the campus. Whatever decisions we make, our attention will always be on the safety of our students, faculty and staff and our commitment to academic excellence. We will communicate details and plans for the fall as they become available with the college community and others through email, the College's website and social media outlets.

Although this is a time of great uncertainty, we remain focused on what we do best: prepare graduates to become self-directed learners and self-reliant persons capable of leading others and solving world challenges and issues. We are continuing to have ongoing discussions about what we can do to ensure our students receive an outstanding educational experience during the pandemic. We are adhering to "social distancing" and "heightened cleaning and sanitation protocols" throughout the campus. This work requires close collaboration with the Tougaloo College COVID-19 Response Team and employees across the College to ensure coordinated efforts. Additionally, our efforts are focused on the four pillars identified in Strategic Plan 2020-2025: enrollment, retention, teaching and learning, and first-class infrastructure, business operations and fundraising.

In this challenging time, we greatly appreciate the unwavering support and patience from students and parents, faculty and staff and supporters as we work through the unknowns faced by Tougaloo and other institutions of higher learning. Given the uncertainty about the spread of this global pandemic, and while we cannot predict whether, when, or to what degree COVID-19 will impact institutions in the future, we must be prepared to move towards a "new normal." We ask that you move with us and remain confident in our intentions to develop and implement a plan for the upcoming academic year. We hope and pray that you continue your steadfast commitment to help us build a stronger Tougaloo College.

*Preserving and Advancing Excellence, we are Tougaloo!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen Walters". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carmen J. Walters, Ph.D.