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**RONALD A. JOHNSON, PH.D.**  
P R E S I D E N T

October 19, 2018

Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Students and the greater CAU Community,

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you today of my intentions to step down as President of Clark Atlanta University effective December 7th.

I make this decision for personal reasons and I advised our Board of Trustees of my intentions today. While I am reluctant to leave this great University and its incredible students, faculty and staff I am incredibly proud of what we accomplished together during this period of institutional transformation.

Three years ago, I had the honor and privilege of becoming the 4th President of CAU, a historic institution with a combined 300-year legacy handed down to us from our preceding institutions, Atlanta University (1865) and Clark College (1869).

Fueled by this great heritage, I, along with each of you, embarked on a journey to take CAU to new heights of excellence, innovation, engagement and global recognition. Change is not always easy and the road to success is often paved with many challenges. However, together we made tremendous progress at CAU by holding fast to our twin mottos to ***Find a Way or Make One*** and ***Culture for Service***.

Through determined focus and perseverance, we were able to make significant progress on our journey together:

**Strengthened the Long-Term Health and Sustainability of CAU**

- **Reaffirmation of Critical CAU Accreditations**

We completed a successful reaffirmation of accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) in 2016. We also completed a comprehensive review of the University pursuant to CAU's continued listing without qualification as a member of the United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education Ministries' University Senate in 2017.

- **Improved Enrollment, Retention and Graduation**

We instituted new admittance strategies and processes that greatly increased student enrollment. First-year student retention increased from 66 percent to a record high of **70 percent** and the six-year graduation rate improved from 38 percent in 2015 to **45 percent** in 2018.

- **Enhanced Student Experiences**

We established a new student fitness center; remodeled the gym, tennis courts, locker rooms; and completed renovations of an upperclass dorm and men's dorm. We raised school spirit by strengthening our athletic program and supporting the academic success

of our student-athletes, expanded the size of the university cafeteria and renovated the student center. Additionally, we raised funds for student travel to China, Paris and New York and began the build-out of a new **Honors and Scholars Ideation Center** and a new facility for international students.

- **Curriculum Modernization**

Over the past three years, we have begun implementation of major faculty-led academic policy modernization and curriculum reforms for all 51 undergraduate programs. As part of this effort, workshops and seminars have been conducted to introduce CAU faculty and academic staff to stackable credentials, e-portfolios, and best practices in student professional and career development.

We also launched our **Digital Learning Initiative** and our **Career Pathways Initiative** (CPI), an accelerator focused on career readiness, coaching, resume and interview preparation. These changes were put in place to better prepare our students for productive careers and/or admission into graduate and professional school.

- **Financial Improvements**

Over the period 2015 to 2018, Moody Investor Services changed CAU's credit outlook from negative to positive. **Moody's positive outlook for CAU** signals the University is a thriving institution and stands in stark contrast to Moody's 2018 outlook for US higher education overall, which was revised to negative from stable.

CAU's alumni giving has increased by 50% between 2015 and 2018. Under my leadership, alumni annual giving participation nearly doubled.

### **Raised the Visibility and Overall Awareness of CAU**

- **New Engagement Initiatives**

Thanks to our rigorous engagement efforts we have seen an increase in giving. Notable among these efforts was our ability to cultivate and secure the first **\$1 million donation** from a University graduate, Award-Winning Director/Producer **Kenya Barris**. This academic year, we kicked off **CAU's 30th Anniversary** to highlight the University while engaging our alumni and acknowledging their tremendous contributions to the fabric of this nation.

- **Strategic Relationships and Collaborations**

We are now more transfer-friendly as a result of strategic relationships and articulation agreements that permit seamless transfer of students from more than (10) two-year colleges to CAU. Additionally, partnerships with the Middlebury Institute in Monterey, California, the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois, MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Clark Russell Entrepreneurship and Technology Ecosystem (CREATE) have been established to develop innovative programming and to create scholarship and employment pipeline opportunities for CAU students.

## Clarified the Vision for the Future

- **2018-2023 Draft Strategic Plan**

The draft CAU Strategic Plan 2018-2023 is in the process of being approved by the board and is a natural extension of the University's successful efforts in producing leaders, change agents, pioneers, innovators, and business and social entrepreneurs. It is designed to strengthen the long-term health and sustainability of CAU in a world of heightened global uncertainty and social and economic disruption.

The Strategic Plan develops strategies and action plans for distinctive programs in education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship. It also builds on the importance of cross-disciplinary knowledge and hands-on, real world experience in the pursuit of innovative solutions to the challenges faced by people, society and the planet.

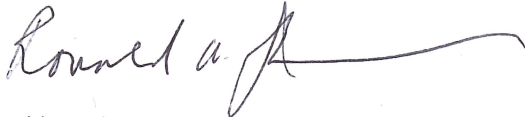
As evidenced by these achievements and many others, we have placed our beloved CAU on an upward trajectory that has been acknowledged around the nation.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the creativity and hard work of our exceptional Faculty, Staff, and Alumni. Thank you for your wisdom and continued dedication to the lives of our students and support of our great university.

Most of all I would like to thank our students. You are the heart, mind and soul of this University and I am humbled to have had this opportunity to work with so many determined, energetic and innovative young people.

Irene and I thank all of you for all you have done and will continue to do in support of the University's truly enduring mission: ***To Lift Every Voice and Ignite New Possibilities.***

Best Wishes for the Future,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ronald A. Johnson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ronald A. Johnson