



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts
April 26, 2018

Colleagues: Please see below for updates on developments and activities of interest to our campus community.

Enrollment: Early indicators continue to point toward strong enrollment for Fall 2018. Currently we are running ahead of the same week last year with both freshman and transfer applications and acceptances. As we move deeper into the spring, housing deposits and SOAR registrations will give us additional information with which to make enrollment projections and budgetary decisions for the upcoming year (remember that almost two-thirds of our budget is tied to enrollment). Two areas to watch for summer and fall will be graduate enrollment and enrollment in online programs. We have targeted these categories as growth areas and have expanded our partnership with the marketing firm Collegis Education in an effort to enhance our footprint in these areas.

Strategic Planning: Our existing strategic plan was created in 2013 and approved in 2014 with the understanding that it would guide University operations for five years. Accordingly, the planning effort to create a new strategic plan is now underway. The 21-member committee leading this endeavor held its organizational meeting on April 4. The committee includes representation from all divisions on campus. Significantly, six of the 21 members were appointed by elected leaders of the Faculty and Staff Senates. The members are committed to building a plan that is broadly reflective of stakeholder sentiment, and there will be opportunities for all members of the UNA community to share input on priorities and to comment on the plan as it begins to take shape. The objective is to finalize the plan during fall semester so that it can be shared with the Senates prior to submission to the Board of Trustees for approval. The Strategic Planning Committee is co-chaired by Provost Ross Alexander and Dr. Tera Kirkman, associate dean of the Anderson College of Nursing.

Advancement: We officially closed the Build the Pride Comprehensive Campaign last week with the announcement that we surpassed our goal with a final tally of \$36,674,395. This is an outstanding result, and the benefits of the funds raised during the campaign will be felt across our campus for many years to come. Among other outcomes, the campaign generated 72 new student scholarships, produced the first named college and first named academic department in the history of UNA, and facilitated the development of new academic buildings. Dr. Debbie Shaw has agreed to extend her service as interim Vice President for University Advancement for one additional year to help close the books on this campaign and lay the groundwork for our next major fundraising operation. As we look ahead to that effort, it will be important to ensure that our future fundraising priorities align with the goals identified in the new strategic plan.

Exploration of Doctoral Programs: Planning is now underway to add two doctoral programs, one in Business Administration and the other in Exercise Science, to UNA's inventory of academic offerings. This is an exciting development in the history of our University and, along with the addition of the Honors College and School of the Arts, underscores our commitment to become a Division I institution in academics as well as in athletics.

Facilities: The redesigned plan for Harrison Hall, future home of the Anderson College of Nursing, is complete. The Alabama Building Commission granted preliminary approval of the plan, which was followed by a mandatory peer review made necessary by state regulations on storm shelters. With that step now complete, the Building Commission will proceed to final approval. We anticipate a bid opening next month and ground breaking soon thereafter. For student housing, we have concluded, with input from our financial advisor, that construction of a new residence hall would exceed our current borrowing capacity. Accordingly, we have contracted with a firm that specializes in campus housing to consult on options for our older residence halls. Experts with that firm are exploring a quick turnaround rehabilitation for selected halls – one that focuses more on cosmetics than structural changes -- that would allow us to meet student needs while simultaneously protecting our budget. The firm will assist the University in creating a plan for an overall residential life experience for our students that emphasizes retention and academic success.

Budget for FY19: On April 2, Governor Ivey signed the Education Trust Fund budget (SB175) for FY19. Based on that budget, we will receive a 6.12% increase in our state appropriation in 2019. This percentage increase represents our best showing in a decade and will add \$1.7 million to UNA's budget. While we are grateful for this increase, our new (total) state allocation of \$29.9 million for FY19 is still well below the pre-recession figure of \$34 million that the University received in 2008. Moreover, even with this increase, UNA will remain in a *very distant last place* when funding among state institutions is compared on an FTE per-student basis. It will take many years of above-average increases for UNA to move alongside peer schools that receive millions of dollars more in funding on a per-student basis. *Consequently, Project 208 must remain a top priority objective for this administration and for all those who care about the future of this wonderful institution.*

Salary Adjustment: The education budget signed by Governor Ivey contains a 2.5% salary increase for K-12 employees. Unfortunately, the state does not include public university employees when COLAs are decided. Each institution has to make an independent decision about any salary increase and then find a way to fund it. The UNA Executive Council is attempting to incorporate such an adjustment into our budgetary planning for FY19. Our ability to deliver on this possibility depends on two factors: securing an increase in state dollars, and generating enough enrollment growth to produce new dollars from tuition, fees, and auxiliary functions such as student housing. We have checked the first box by virtue of the increase in state dollars discussed above. With regard to enrollment, indicators for Fall 2018 are strong, but it will be mid-summer before we have a better idea of likely student headcount and credit hour production. For now, know that a salary adjustment is very high on our list of priorities for the upcoming year.

Commencement: We will welcome Senator Annette Taddeo back to campus as our speaker for spring commencement. Sen. Taddeo is a 1992 UNA graduate who made history last year when she became the first Latina Democrat elected to serve in the Florida State Senate. Please see the UNA website for more details on the journey that brought this alumna from Colombia to Florence, and then on to Florida where she has established herself as a successful small business owner and elected lawmaker. There will be two commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 12, with Sen. Taddeo speaking at both. Graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Anderson College of Nursing will participate in the first ceremony at 10:00 a.m. Graduates from the College of Business and the College of Education and Human Sciences will participate in the second ceremony at 2:00 p.m.

Dena and I look forward to seeing you at the annual Faculty/Staff Appreciation Luncheon on Thursday, May 3. The event is a great way to wrap up the academic year as we celebrate service milestones and individual accomplishments. Thank you for all you do for the University of North Alabama. Roar Lions!