



## President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts

February 28, 2023

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**Colleagues:** I hope this note finds you well. We are approaching the midway point for this spring semester, and with that in mind I would like to take this opportunity to share important updates from the University of North Alabama.

**State Budgetary Process:** The 2023 legislative session is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, March 7. That means our first official look at the state portion of our budget for FY24 should come around that same date when Governor Ivey delivers her annual address. Please keep in mind that any reference to the “Governor’s budget” actually refers to a set of recommendations, albeit very important ones, that kick off the long budgetary process in Montgomery. We have made repeated contact with Governor Ivey and other key executive branch officials to renew our Project 208 call for an equity adjustment for UNA (i.e., above and beyond the normal increase most institutions will receive with tax revenues coming in at a good pace). Our core request is for an increase of \$10.5 million in recurring dollars to move our University from the bottom of the list in per-student funding and bring us alongside at least some peer schools of similar size, scope, and mission. The next step for the budget once the Governor releases it will be the Finance and Taxation Education Committee of the Alabama Senate, chaired by Senator Arthur Orr of Decatur with local Senator Tim Melson also serving as a senior member of that panel.

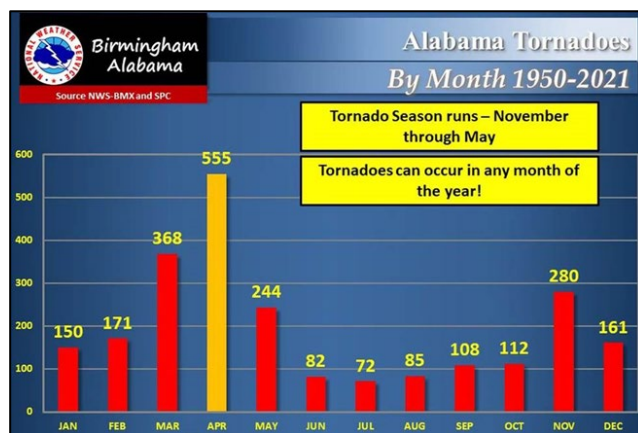
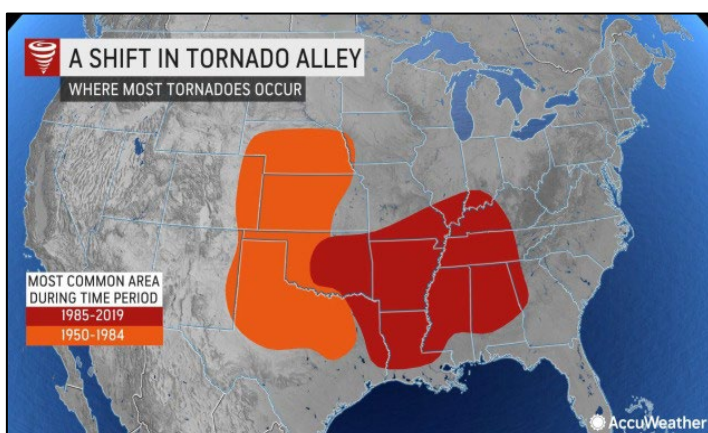
**Enrollment:** Spring headcount stands at 9,665 with additional registrations yet to come before census date on March 24. That places us up 21% in headcount and up 10% in credit hour production over the same point last year. We expect to record an increase in summer enrollments as well. Looking ahead to Fall 2023, student interest in UNA remains strong with total undergraduate applications up 19% over the previous year. These numbers stand in stark contrast to recent reports on significant enrollment shortfalls at public regional universities across the country. I commend Provost Alexander and his team in Enrollment Management for coordinating and overseeing the efforts leading to these great outcomes. It is also important to note that we are matching this quantitative growth with a qualitative expansion of our academic profile. Our retention and graduation rates are increasing, as are the test scores of our freshman applicants. These are but few of the markers of excellence of which we should be very proud.

**Update on Pedestrian Safety Issues:** We continue to work with the City of Florence for action on pedestrian safety issues on Pine Street and other campus roadways. I am grateful to the various constituency groups in our shared governance system, each of which passed a joint resolution to demonstrate that the UNA community speaks with one voice on this important issue. Our Board of Trustees will consider a similar resolution during its upcoming quarterly meeting on March 17. Once that step is complete, we will transmit all resolutions to the City with a renewed request that officials there keep this issue at the forefront of the local agenda.

**1830 Giving Initiative:** Tomorrow, March 1, kicks off the 1830 Giving Initiative organized by Kevin Haslam and his staff in University Advancement. As many of you know, FY22 represented a record year for our University in terms of fundraising, measured both in terms of the total amount of dollars raised as well as the number of unique donors engaged in giving to our University. With regard to the latter, it is VP Haslam’s goal that we engage 1,830 individual donors during the month of March as part of this giving initiative. Dena and I intend to support the cause, and we respectfully ask that you consider doing so as well to show your support for our students and for this wonderful University that is now celebrating its 193<sup>rd</sup> year of educational excellence. That’s something to ROAR about! Gifts of any size and for any purpose will be warmly appreciated. Please visit Advancement’s webpage for additional information on this opportunity.

**Federal Outreach:** We received good news last week that Congressman Robert Aderholt has accepted our invitation to visit campus and serve as our VIP “switch flipper” for the Light the Fountain celebration on March 16. First elected to Congress in 1996, Rep. Aderholt is a senior member of the powerful House Committee on Appropriations and was recently appointed to chair the Labor, Health and Human Services & Education Subcommittee that is responsible for appropriating non-defense dollars in the federal budget. With the redistricting that occurred in Alabama last year, our campus has moved into his 4<sup>th</sup> congressional district. We are the only four-year university in that sprawling and rural district. The boundaries run from the western half of Lauderdale County all the way over to the Georgia line and then southward to pick up a portion of Tuscaloosa County. Congressman Aderholt was instrumental in securing \$3.5 million for UNA in the spending bill that President Biden signed into law in December. Eastern portions of the City of Florence and Lauderdale County remain in the 5<sup>th</sup> district, now represented by first-term Congressman Dale Strong. Combined, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> congressional districts account for a majority of our students.

**Weather Awareness:** We are heading into the peak of spring tornado season in Alabama, and the Executive Council has initiated a review of our campus emergency preparedness protocols. As indicated in the graphics below (courtesy of Accuweather and the NWS-Birmingham), the threat of severe weather in our part of the country has become more pronounced in recent years and is greatest in the months of March and April. When the storm alert level for our area is high, we will do our part to make campus aware of possible threats and developing situations. Even so, there is no substitute for individual awareness. Please stay weather aware this spring and exercise discretion as you travel to and from campus for work and events.



**Important Upcoming Dates:**

- March 3..... Midterm for Spring Semester
- March 13-16 ..... Site Visit by SACSCOC Team
- March 16 ..... Light the Fountain
- March 17 ..... Board of Trustees Quarterly Meeting
- March 24 ..... Spring Enrollment Census
- March 27-April 2... Spring Break, University Closed
- April 7 ..... Good Friday, University Closed

**Dena and I extend our very best wishes to you and thank you for all you do for the University of North Alabama!**