



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts
April 28, 2017

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

Enrollment: We continue to monitor enrollment for Fall 2018 closely. We are up in key indicators such as new student acceptances (both undergraduate and graduate), SOAR registrations, and housing applications. If continuing student registrations show a similar increase, we could experience a third consecutive enrollment increase in Fall 2017. At the same time, we made a decision last summer to reduce the number of scholarship offers for incoming students -- a part of the budget that has been growing very quickly -- and we will not be able to determine the final impact of that move on our conversion rate (accepted to enrolled students) until the beginning of fall semester. Enrollment remains an item of strategic importance for this campus.

Logo and Branding Update: I appreciate the good work of our Office of University Communications and Marketing in developing our new logo and branding plan. The recent branding study revealed broad support to continue with the lion silhouette theme that has been in place at UNA since 2008. Accordingly, and in keeping with emails sent by Bryan Rachal, our logo emphasis is changing only slightly to make the "Circle Lion" (see top left of this page) our new primary mark. This decision allows us to push ahead with our marketing efforts, eliminate or redesign items featuring the old flame logo, and pay more attention to the literature and graphics used to promote our University. (Have you ever noticed how many different shades of purple there are?) Consistency is important in this area, and I ask for your help in making sure that everyone follows institutional guidance and standards with our branding.

Leadership Transitions: Dr. John Thornell will step down from his position as VPAA and Provost after spring commencement. I wish to take this opportunity to thank John for his distinguished record of administrative service to UNA, and I know you join me in wishing him well as he transitions back to the ranks of the teaching faculty for the upcoming academic year. Dr. Ross Alexander will begin work as Provost on July 1, and Dr. Joy Borah will serve as acting VPAA during the interim period. The search for the next VP for Business and Financial Affairs has moved along well. Dr. Doug Barrett chairs that search committee and reports that we are on track to bring finalists to campus prior to commencement. As with the Provost search, we will structure opportunities for faculty and staff to interact with the finalists and provide feedback.

Spring Commencement: Our two commencement ceremonies for this spring semester will take place at 10:00am (Nursing and Arts and Sciences) and 2:00pm (Education and Business) on May 13. We will honor Wendell Wilkie Gunn with an honorary doctoral degree, and Mr. Gunn will serve also as commencement speaker. He has a great story to tell and is very passionate about the University of North Alabama. You will want to hear his address!

Divisional Reorganization: The planned move of Enrollment Management back into the Academic Affairs division will occur early in the fall semester. That reorganization will help us better coordinate our enrollment and retention efforts. Even so, it will increase the size of a division that is already very large. Accordingly, I have asked members of my administrative team to plan for a possible move of Information Technology Services from Academic Affairs to the Division of Business and Financial Affairs. The placement of ITS within the business unit is a common arrangement in higher education. The plan under consideration would leave Educational Technology Services with the Library, and thus with Academic Affairs, in order to support the instructional efforts of our faculty.

Tree Assessment: Staff from UNA Facilities have conducted an evaluation of old-growth trees on campus to determine what safety concerns might exist. This process was underway prior to the “tree event” that occurred at the President’s Home on February 12, but that close call did underscore that these safety concerns are very real. We have brought in an expert from Auburn to consult with Paul Graham, our in-house arborist. A total of 26 trees on campus have been evaluated. Of those, only two have been placed in the highest risk category due to decay, disease, and proximity to buildings and/or pedestrian walkways. These two trees – one on the main walkway leading from the traffic circle into Harrison Plaza and the other in front of Willingham Hall – have been recommended for immediate removal. A special presentation and Q&A will be held soon for anyone interested in learning more about this tree assessment process. Today is Arbor Day, and this is a good opportunity to celebrate the beauty of our campus and to stress our commitment to find the right balance between campus safety and aesthetics.

Legislative Affairs: As the 2017 legislative session enters its final month, we can project that our annual state appropriation of approximately \$28 million (our second largest source of funding) will remain unchanged for FY 18. State lawmakers are holding all public universities level in funding from this year to next. Local bills have been getting a great deal of attention lately. One bill, sponsored by Senator Tim Melson, proposes the construction of a multipurpose Agricultural Center in Lauderdale County. If officials are able to determine an appropriate funding source, plans call for the Center to have up to 10,000 seats, so this venue could be useful to UNA on a selective basis for events that exceed the capacity of Flowers Hall. Another initiative deals with workforce development. We have initiated a local bill that would open the door for the Shoals Economic Development Authority (SEDA) and the State to provide funding for selected UNA projects that are tied to regional economic development and job growth. Our bill parallels a similar effort brought forth by Northwest Shoals Community College. Achieving funding equity for UNA remains a very high priority for us in this and future legislative sessions.

~

I recently marked the completion of my second year on the job as president of UNA. It’s been a rewarding journey for me and my family, and we continue to be grateful to have the opportunity to work with you to fulfill the promise of this wonderful and historic institution. At my investiture in August of 2015, I closed with the observation that it’s “Our Time to Roar” at the University of North Alabama. You can hear and feel that roar growing louder in ways big and small, from new program accreditations to academic honors, and from improvements in campus life to the move to NCAA Division I. Because of your hard work, we are on a great trajectory at UNA.

Dena and I wish you a fun, safe, and enjoyable summer. Find time to relax. And wherever you go and whatever you do, wear purple and gold – lots and lots of purple and gold. We appreciate all you do for the University of North Alabama. Thank you, and Roar Lions!