



President's Communiqué
Dr. Ken Kitts
December 7, 2017

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

State Funding: In the weeks ahead, you can expect to hear more about UNA's push to achieve equity in funding from the state of Alabama. Thanks to expert assistance from our colleagues in OIRPA, we have good data in hand to help us better understand the dimensions of this inequity. The problem is worse than we thought. Simply put, *we are significantly behind all other public universities in this state when funding is compared on an FTE per-student basis.* Along with several senior administrators, I have been working on a plan of action to address this issue. We are calling this initiative "Project 208," as that is the number of miles from our campus to the State House in Montgomery. Our hope is to use that title to remind our elected officials that "out of sight, out of mind" has become an unfortunate political reality for UNA. Project 208 revolves around pulling this information together, getting it in the right hands, and then organizing a strategic and long-term effort to improve UNA's position in future funding decisions. For those who are interested, we are planning a special presentation on Project 208 that will be held at 2:00pm on January 9, 2018, at a location yet to be determined. Attendance at this information session is strictly optional.

Enrollment: The weather cooperated for our annual Fall Preview Day on Saturday, November 11. Over 1,500 prospective students and parents visited UNA that day to tour campus, learn more about our academic programs, and enjoy one of three home athletic contests that were held in the afternoon. Many of you assisted with Preview Day, and the feedback we received from those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. Interest from prospective students continues to be high. We are currently running ahead of last year with freshman applications. One variable to watch will be the size of this year's graduating classes. Last year we graduated an unusually high number of students -- a great thing for our graduates and the region we serve, but a challenge nonetheless for enrollment as it placed additional pressure on our recruitment and retention efforts. We hope to see those numbers return to levels that are more normal for the current academic year.

Academic Developments: After months of preparation and discussions, our academic leaders are ready to move ahead with plans to transition the UNA Honors Program to Honors College status, and to create a UNA School of the Arts as an organizational umbrella to encompass the existing (and continuing) Department of Art, Department of Music, and Theatre Program. These changes would take effect fall 2018. Provost Alexander has sought input on these plans from key stakeholders, and the proposals have also been vetted and

approved by the appropriate committees of the Board of Trustees en route to consideration by the full Board on its upcoming meeting on December 12. Both of these moves are consistent with strategic objectives of the University and will allow us to enhance our recruitment of top students, to assist in securing external grants, and to raise the academic profile and visibility of the University.

Diversity: Effective January 1, the role of Chief Diversity Officer at UNA will pass from University Attorney Amber Fite-Morgan to Chief Enrollment Officer Ron Patterson. Amber stepped into this role in the summer of 2015 when Dr. Thomas Calhoun left UNA to become president of Chicago State University. Both Amber and I understood at the time that asking the University Attorney to serve in this capacity was not optimal, as she needs to be free to render legal advice without having to balance that against an administrative responsibility in one particular area. Accordingly, Ron and I have been talking for the past year about moving the diversity function under his supervision. Ron agrees that the time is now right for him to assume this additional duty. He understands the importance of diversity and will help ensure that diversity continues to remain a priority in UNA operations and outreach. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Amber for her many contributions during this period of transition and to welcome Ron to this new role.

Development: We continue to do very well in the area of fundraising. VP Debbie Shaw tells me that we will soon reach and surpass our expanded campaign goal of \$35 million, and we are in talks now regarding the appropriate way to close the current campaign (2013-2018) in a manner that will create momentum for our future fundraising efforts. The annual Day of Giving on November 28 succeeded beyond our expectations. We finished that 24-hour push with \$115,000 in gifts, a tally which more than doubled last year's total of \$42,000. Finally, please remember that the Faculty/Staff campaign extends through December 31. We have not yet met our goal of achieving 55% participation – a mark that would assist us in appeals to external donors. The amount does not matter as much as the act of giving and the impact on our rate of participation. *Please give and encourage others to do likewise.* It's all about supporting our students!

Commencement: Winter commencement exercises will be held on Saturday, December 16. Our guest speaker this year will be UNA alumnus Jonathan Pettus, who previously served as Chief Information Officer of NASA and now is the associate director of the Marshall Space Flight Center. The ceremony for graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Anderson College of Nursing will take place at 10:00am, and the ceremony for graduates from the College of Business and the College of Education and Human Sciences will take place at 2:00pm.

In closing, please remember that UNA's holiday break this year will begin at the close of business on December 20, 2017, and extend through January 3, 2018. Dena and I hope that each of you can use this time to rest, relax, and recharge for what promises to be a great spring semester. We thank you for all you do for UNA and extend warmest holiday wishes to you and your families.