



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts

November 25, 2019

Colleagues: I hope this message finds you well. See below for a few updates from the University of North Alabama:

Enrollment: Final census enrollment for Fall 2019 is 8,046 students, a significant increase over last year's tally of 7,650 and a new record for UNA. Perhaps even more impressive than the overall number is the balance in this class – up in both undergraduate and graduate students, up in both traditional and online formats, and up in both headcount as well as in credit hour production. The freshman class of 1,030 represents a 2.5% increase over last year. The number of new international students increased by 15%, a performance that runs counter to national trends in that sector. Strong enrollment is an unqualified good for our University, and these numbers all align nicely with our “smart growth” strategies. It takes a great collective effort to generate this type of outcome, so heartfelt thanks to all members of the UNA family for this record-setting performance!

State Funding / Project 208: As you know, Alabama is different from most states in that funding for public universities is not tied to measurable outcomes such as enrollment, performance, or number of degrees granted. An enrollment increase or decrease has no impact on the amount of funding that goes to an individual campus. That's bad news for a growing campus community such as UNA. Our Project 208 initiative has drawn attention to this problem and others that surround the issue of higher education funding in Alabama. Consequently, there has been recent talk in Montgomery of moving to an outcomes or performance-based system to guide funding decisions. We welcome that move and the accountability it would bring. At the same time, performance-based funding assumes that all institutions share the same starting line in terms of resources. That is simply not the case! The two universities closest to us in size, one slightly larger and one slightly smaller, each receive \$10 million more per year from the state than we do. Accordingly, our position on this matter is that the equity issue be addressed before the focus turns to performance-based funding.

Bond Bill: As relates to the topic of state funding, this year presents an additional opportunity for UNA due to the likelihood that the state will pass a bond bill. If authorized for the upcoming legislative session, that measure could free approximately \$300 million in one-time funding to assist the state's 24 community colleges and 14 universities with construction projects. We are already positioning ourselves for a share of that funding.

Founders' Day: This January, we will inaugurate a new tradition by celebrating Founders' Day at UNA. As an institution, we date our history back to the opening of LaGrange College on January 11, 1830, and so we will celebrate the anniversary of UNA each year on or around that date (some flexibility is in order for years when the 11th falls on a weekend). This January will mark our 190th anniversary as an institution of higher education. That's a remarkable accomplishment that should fill all of us with Lion Pride -- and the day is not far off when we will want to start planning for a multi-year celebration in anticipation of our bicentennial in 2030.

Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan: By now, most of you have seen Ron Patterson's emails asking you to take the Diversity and Inclusion Campus Climate Survey. If you have already responded to that invitation, please accept my thanks for sharing your views. If not, I ask that you locate that email now (also linked in the current edition of the *Faculty and Staff Digests*) and complete the survey. Your input is very important in shaping the new Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

2020 Census: In the spring semester, you will hear a good deal about the upcoming count for the 2020 national census. The stakes in getting an accurate and inclusive count are especially high in Alabama, as we are one of the states at risk of losing a congressional seat when reapportionment occurs in the wake of the census. Alabama's estimated response rate to the 2010 census was only 72%. In addition to maximizing our political representation in Congress, a wide variety of federal programs tie funding to census data, so the bottom line is that we are going to need a full court press in the spring semester to make sure that all of our students (an at-risk population due to the transient nature of enrollment) understand the importance of being counted.

Harrison Hall: Work continues on Laura M. Harrison Hall, the future home of the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. The above average rainfall we experienced in the early phases of this project made it necessary to adjust the schedule that initially projected an opening in January. We are now hoping that the building and the external storm shelter (both must be ready before the building can be opened) will allow occupancy to occur over spring break. This beautiful new facility will be very visible from Pine Street and serve as a great addition to the north end of campus. Stay tuned for an invitation to tour the building and attend the opening ceremony in Spring 2020.

Important Dates:

- Wednesday-Friday, November 27-29: Thanksgiving Break
- Wednesday, December 4: Annual Santa Party at the President's Home
- Thursday, December 5: Study Day
- Friday, December 6: Beginning of Final Exams
- Friday, December 13: Winter Commencement Ceremony for ACONHP and COEHS
- Saturday, December 14: Winter Commencement Ceremonies for COAS and COB
- Thursday, December 19: Beginning of Christmas Break
- Friday, January 3: University Reopens for Spring Semester

I hope you find this information helpful. In this season of Thanksgiving, Dena and I want you to know how grateful we are for your individual and collective efforts on behalf of the University of North Alabama. We are blessed to work with such a talented, enthusiastic, and dedicated group of people. Thank you for all you do for UNA!