



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts

September 28, 2018

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

Enrollment: Census for fall semester will not occur until October 31 in order to accommodate late registrations in the new eight-week sessions. While we will not know the final tally until that date, I can tell you that our numbers are strong. As of yesterday, total headcount stands at 7,559, an increase of 1.4% or 102 students over last fall. Credit hours are up by the same percentage. These numbers will continue to rise during the next month as additional registrations are recorded, and we expect to have a fall headcount of 7,600 or more when all is said and done. This means we have already surpassed the old enrollment record set in 2016 of 7,492 students. Embedded in this year's totals are significant increases in the number of graduate students, online students, and international students who are enrolled at UNA. It takes many hands to engineer this type of success, and I wish to thank those who helped us realize our enrollment goals for Fall 2018.

Advancement Search: Dr. Debbie Shaw is now in the third and final year of her fixed-term service as Vice President for University Advancement. On Dr. Shaw's watch, we have reorganized and strengthened the UNA Foundation, exceeded our comprehensive campaign goal, and increased the size of the UNA endowment by twenty percent. I want to thank Debbie publicly for all she has done, and continues to do, to cultivate external support and bring private dollars to UNA. Dr. Shaw plans to retire at the end of the spring semester, and it is important that we identify the right individual to assume this position so that we can maintain this excellent fundraising momentum. With that in mind, I have reconstituted an eleven-member search committee under the leadership of Dean Carmen Burkhalter to help identify the next VPUA. The position should post within the next month.

Diversity Forum: Under the leadership of Ron Patterson, we continue to work on the planning and rollout of a multi-year diversity plan for UNA. Significant work on this plan occurred last year, with even more ambitious ideas and action plans on the table for 2018-19. We want to make sure that all interested parties are aware of the plan and have an opportunity to speak to diversity issues at UNA. With the assistance of Provost Alexander and Mr. Patterson, we have scheduled a special forum for 2:00pm on Thursday, October 4, in Gunn Commons 330. In addition to sharing information on our emerging diversity plan, there will be plenty of time for questions and open discussion.

Funding and Project 208: Our budget for the new fiscal year that begins on October 1 will reflect an increase of \$1.7 million to UNA's state appropriation. That will bring our new (total) state allocation to \$29.9 million for FY19. This is still well below the pre-recession figure of \$34 million that the University received in 2008, and it is well below what other public universities in Alabama receive when factored on a per-FTE basis. For these reasons, we are mounting a "full court press" in Montgomery for the

second year of Project 208, and we are exploring options to supplement state support with other public funding from local and federal sources. Our bottom line is stark: we are \$25 million below average in annual funding among our sister institutions in Alabama, which makes it very difficult to plan a budget and meet the many needs that exist across campus. To illustrate the point, we recently announced a COLA for employees that will begin on December 1. We used this same start date for the last COLA in 2016. Deferring the rollout of the salary adjustment from October 1 to December 1 provides \$250,000 in one-time savings that will be used to address critical maintenance and facility repair issues across campus. Similar balancing acts occur almost daily – and all of these tough decisions trace back to the lack of funding equity for UNA.

Commencement Ticketing: We recently announced plans to move toward a ticketing system for the winter commencement ceremonies on December 15. Key factors in this determination include the record number of students that we expect to graduate this year, the continual increase in audience size, and the reduction in seating capacity as a result of renovations now underway in Flowers Hall. Those of you who have attended recent commencement ceremonies will recall that overflow crowds have become the rule rather than the exception. We have to find a way to manage this event more effectively to ensure the safety and comfort of all attendees. At the same time, we understand that change of this type is never easy. We are engaged in discussions with SGA leaders and graduating students to make sure that all concerns are heard regarding the ticketing plan. We will use those discussions to inform our thinking as we make final decisions on winter commencement and look ahead to future graduation exercises.

Strategic Planning: Work on the University's new 2019-2024 strategic plan continues on schedule with direction from a steering committee that includes representation from all quarters of campus in addition to community input. Provost Alexander and Dr. Tera Kirkman, associate dean of the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions, serve as co-chairs of this group. Though many discussions with stakeholder groups, five general themes for the new strategic plan have been identified. Efforts will continue through fall to refine those themes and to finalize a draft plan by the end of the semester.

I hope you find this summary useful. We are already one month into this fall semester with a lot of great and exciting things happening here at UNA. Dena and I thank you for all you do for the University of North Alabama! Roar Lions!