



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts
June 27, 2019

Colleagues: I hope this message finds you well. As we near the midway point for summer break, I would like to take this opportunity to provide a few updates from the University of North Alabama:

Enrollment: We continue to monitor enrollment indicators for Fall 2019. Currently, we are running ahead of this same point last year with SOAR attendance/reservations, housing deposits, and overall registrations for fall term. If these trends hold, we should have a new enrollment record to celebrate in a few months. That would be a significant achievement given data just released on the number of students who graduated from UNA this past year. Across summer, fall, and spring of the 2018-19 academic year, we graduated a total of 1,634 students -- an increase of 172 graduates (+12%) over the old record set a year ago. Allow me to be clear on this point: educating and graduating students is what we are here to do, so these numbers testify to institutional success and represent great news for our students, our region, and our area employers. At the same time, the large outflow of students presents an enrollment challenge in that we now have that many more seats to fill for the upcoming year.

Project 208: The Alabama Legislature concluded its 2019 session on May 31. The final education budget for FY 20 was signed into law by Governor Ivey on June 6. That budget increases UNA's annual state appropriation from \$29,912,446 in FY 19 to \$32,766,141 in FY 20. Our increase of 9.54% compares favorably with the average of 7.9% across all Alabama public universities and is a direct reflection of our Project 208 efforts to bring UNA into the consciousness of key state lawmakers. The infusion of almost \$3 million in new, recurring funding will be helpful as we address campus needs. Despite this good outcome, I must tell you that we are still far away from our goal of equity in per-student funding from the state. Consider the state appropriation for the three Alabama universities closest to us in size (all between 5,000 and 8,000 FTE). We'll forego names of these peer schools but otherwise use confirmed enrollment and budgetary data to make the point:

University	FTE Enrollment Fall 2018	Total State Funding FY 19	Percentage Increase for FY 20	Total State Funding for FY 20
XXXXXXX	7,995	\$49,694,224	6.08%	\$52,714,943
XXXXXXX	6,631	\$39,973,732	6.73%	\$42,664,287
UNA	6,126	\$29,912,446	9.54%	\$32,766,141
XXXXXXX	5,697	\$39,846,264	6.52%	\$42,443,721

The illustration above represents but one year in what has become a century of persistent, severe, and inequitable underfunding by the state. Consequently, we have accumulated well over \$100 million in deferred maintenance and capital improvement needs. As we head into the third year of Project 208, the challenge for us is to build on the promising start of this initiative and to find new ways to communicate with officials about the outstanding job UNA is doing in serving our region and state – and the need for fairness in funding if we are to continue to do so.

Other Notes on the Budget:

- The UNA Board of Trustees met last week and approved the University's tuition and fees schedule for the upcoming academic year. I am pleased to tell you that additional funds have been allocated to increase tuition remission for eligible employees, spouses, and dependents from 75% of tuition to 100% coverage of both tuition and fees. Coverage for summer courses will continue at the existing rate of 75% remission for tuition and mandatory fees. A copy of the revised policy may be found on the Human Resources website.
- With the Board's approval, we have eliminated most general fees to give students and parents a better idea of the true cost of attendance. UNA has emerged as a state leader in this commitment to financial transparency. The move to consolidate expenses, coupled with a modest tuition increase, will not change UNA's overall position as ninth out of fourteen public universities (ranked from most to least expensive) in Alabama when it comes to total tuition and fees. We are proud of that position, especially given the fact that we are less heavily subsidized by the state than our peers. We are determined to keep a UNA education within reach of our students. On a related and personal note, I have made the decision to teach my PS 241 class this fall using, for the first time, a free textbook available to students as part of the Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative.
- The State of Alabama funds cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for K-12 employees but not for public universities. This is yet another reason why Project 208 is so important to all who call UNA home. With UNA trailing our peer schools by \$10-20 million in annual funding, it is difficult to find the millions of dollars required for a COLA. Even so, we have been able to budget carefully and plan for COLAs every other year with the most recent adjustment coming in December of 2018. It is my goal to continue with this schedule. This means we are planning now and building up the funds necessary to include a COLA request in our budgetary proposal for the fall of 2020.
- The new revenue available this year will be used with great care to address both facility and personnel needs, including full or partial restitution of open faculty and staff positions totaling over \$1.3 million. Moreover, we will continue to fund the move to midpoint initiative, support the staff salary equity plan brought forth by the Staff Senate, and support the record number of recommended faculty promotions slated to take effect this fall. We will do this while continuing to operate with minimal overhead. Comparative data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* places us last among Alabama's fourteen public universities in spending on administrative salaries, a data point we are using to great effect in Montgomery!

Board of Trustees: In other news from Montgomery, Governor Ivey has signed into law a measure that will increase the size of the UNA Board of Trustees from eleven to twelve total members. We expect to have important news to share within the next month regarding the appointment of a new trustee to fill this seat. The expansion of the Board in this manner brings us more into line with our peer schools and allows us to expand the University's footprint in ways that can help promote UNA's interests.

Important Dates: Looking ahead to the start of fall term, please note the following dates on your calendar:

- Thursday-Saturday, August 15-17: Campus Housing Move-In Weekend
- Tuesday, August 20: Annual Faculty/Staff Meeting
- Wednesday, August 21: Fall Classes Begin
- Wednesday, August 28: Annual Fall Convocation

I hope you find this information helpful. From our family to yours, Dena and I wish you the very best and thank you for all you do for the University of North Alabama.