

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA  
FLORENCE, ALABAMA  
9:00 a.m., Friday, December 15, 2023**

The Board of Trustees for the University of North Alabama met on Friday, December 15, 2023, in The Loft of the Guillot University Center in accordance with Section 6 of Act No. 773 of the 1967 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature. A letter from three Trustees (dated November 21, 2023) was sent via email to Governor Kay Ivey in care of her Director of Constituent Affairs, requesting that the Governor call the quarterly meeting for December 15. Proposed letters calling the Board to the meeting also were sent for the Governor's signature as per standard practice, and the same were mailed from the Governor's office to Trustees in advance of the meeting under the date of November 30, 2023. On December 4, Board members were advised via email that the agenda, proposed resolutions, and supporting documents for items of discussion were available for individual electronic access in the Canvas software system.

Board President Pro Tempore Will Trapp called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**I. INVOCATION**

Mr. Trapp offered the opening invocation.

**II. ROLL CALL**

President Kenneth D. Kitts called the roll, and the following members were in attendance:

Trustee Marty Abrams	Trustee Jim Page
Trustee Joel Anderson II ( <i>via videoconference</i> )	Trustee Steve Pierce
Trustee Kyle Buchanan	Trustee Nancy Sanford
Trustee Wendell Gunn	Trustee Will Trapp

Trustee Simpson Russell was absent at roll call, but joined the meeting at 9:09 a.m. Ex officio member Governor Kay Ivey, and Trustees Gary Smith and Anne Whitaker were absent. A quorum of voting members was in attendance.

**Others present for all or part of the meeting:**

- Mr. Jason Cochran, Exec. Director of Governmental Relations and Economic Development
- Ms. Minnette Ellis, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, and Chief Diversity Officer
- Ms. Amber Fite-Morgan, General Counsel
- Mr. Kevin Haslam, Vice President for University Advancement
- Dr. Katie Kinney, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Josh Looney, Athletics Director
- Mr. Evan Thornton, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
- Dr. K.C. White, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Mr. Duell Aldridge, Coordinator of University Center Operations and Event Management
- Ms. Jen Awwad, Instructional Designer

- Dr. Vince Brewton, Dean of the Cole Honors College
- Ms. Sheena Burgreen, Executive Director of Health and Well-Being
- Dr. Greg Carnes, Dean of the Sanders College of Business and Technology
- Ms. Cindy Conlon, Associate Vice President for Facilities Administration and Planning
- Mr. Brian Ford, 2023-2024 Staff Senate President
- Dr. Matt Green, Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences
- Dr. Lauren Killen, 2023-2024 Faculty Senate President
- Mr. John McGee, Executive Director of Educational Technology Services
- Dr. Michelle Nelson, Associate Dean of Anderson College of Nursing & Health Professions
- Dr. Amber Paulk, Deputy Provost and Board of Trustees Parliamentarian
- Ms. Amber Sandvig, 2023-2024 Student Government Association President
- Ms. Regina Sherrill, Senior Assistant to the President for Administration
- Ms. Julie Taylor, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Dr. Ryan Zayac, Interim Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering

Also present: *TimesDaily* reporter Bernie Delinski

### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mr. Trapp submitted the agenda for consideration. Upon motion by Mr. Pierce and second by Mr. Abrams, the agenda was approved as presented by unanimous vote.

### **IV. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. Trapp submitted the following items for consideration for collective approval:

- A. Minutes of September 8, 2023, Quarterly Board Meeting
- B. Minutes of October 30, 2023, Board Executive Committee Meeting

Upon motion by Mr. Buchanan and second by Mr. Page, the consent agenda items listed above were approved separately and severally by unanimous vote.

### **V. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

Dr. Kitts gave a brief summary on the state of the University from a prepared text. Topics included:

- Commendation of the Executive Council senior leadership team
- Recent notice of SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation for another 10 years with no monitoring or follow-up reports required
- Launch of public phase of “Shine On, Gold” comprehensive campaign
- Enrollment update (record numbers for fall headcount, credit hour production, retention rate, and graduation rate)

- BEST Robotics Competition and Trumbauer Theater Festival hosted on campus on weekend of December 1-3: potential enrollment impact to be determined; estimated local economic impact of \$1 million
- Continued push with Progress 208 efforts as 2024 legislative session approaches
- Recognition of Dr. Carnes with his announcement of plans to step down as dean in August 2024

## **VI. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MATTERS**

Committee chair Page presented items from this committee's December 14 discussions that were on the agenda for the full Board at today's meeting:

### **A. Resolution Approving an Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) for the Master of Health Administration (MHA) Degree**

Following summary comments by Mr. Page, with the recommendation of the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee and upon motion by Mr. Page and second by Mr. Pierce, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

### **B. Accomplishments with Regard to 2019-2024 Strategic Plan**

Dr. Kinney gave summary comments as part of this twice-yearly update on progress with the current strategic plan. There are many signal accomplishments to celebrate as we conclude this guiding document and look to a new plan for the coming five-year term. This information item required no action by the Board.

### **C. Resolution Adopting 2024-2029 Strategic Plan**

Mr. Page commended the Strategic Plan Steering Committee that has worked diligently over many months to bring forward a proposed draft of a new Plan. He noted that the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee recommends adoption, and Mr. Page made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Anderson (a member of the Steering Committee) made additional comments and seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Trapp expressed appreciation to the Steering Committee for its hard work, pointed out that the institutional strategic plan document is published on the UNA website, and noted that the Board receives periodic updates as to progress with each Plan.

Mr. Page also shared some other notes of interest from the preceding afternoon's Committee meeting:

- UNA's selection as part of the Alabama Space Grant Consortium
- Significant rise in the UNA retention rate over the past decade

- UNA housing the North Alabama Public Service Training Center to offer de-escalation training for first responders (funded by \$750,000 Dept. of Justice grant)
- Opening soon: UNA space at Bridge Street Town Centre in Huntsville, and new Computing and Math Building upon completion of construction
- Opportunities for hand-on experiential learning at The Generator in the College Street building

## VII. ADVANCEMENT AND UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE MATTERS

Committee vice chair Page highlighted topics covered in this committee's December 14 meeting. Of particular note: the Advancement team secured \$34.5 million in private gifts and pledges during fiscal year 2022-2023, the most successful fundraising year in UNA history.

One information item from the previous day's committee discussions – **Update on UNA Foundation and University Endowments** – was on the agenda for the full Board at today's meeting. There were no questions, and the endowment report had been reviewed in the committee setting the previous day.

## VIII. CAMPUS LIFE, ATHLETICS, AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MATTERS

Committee chair Pierce reported on the array of topics covered during this committee's December 14 meeting. These included:

- Diversity Initiatives: Commendable GPAs for participants in Presidential Mentors Academy; high number of events sponsored by Mitchell-West Center for Social Inclusion; and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of desegregation of UNA.
- Campus Life: Great recruiting opportunities and publicity with UNA hosting Robotics and Trumbauer events in early December; high national ranking for UNA Bass Fishing Team; Guillot University Center renovations; increase in number of housing applications for next year; and SGA activities this fall.
- Athletics: \$19.6 million in cash and pledges raised in support of athletics program; turf installation at Cox Creek softball field; completion of Flowers Hall lobby renovations; and expanding national exposure for UNA athletic teams.

The Committee had one resolution to recommend for adoption – **Resolution Concerning Selection of Firms to Oversee Program Management and Design of Bank Independent Stadium**. Dr. Looney gave a brief overview of the credentials of the two firms selected to assist in this construction project. Upon motion by Mr. Pierce and second by Dr. Gunn, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

## **IX. FINANCE, FACILITIES, AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MATTERS**

Committee chair Abroms highlighted topics covered in this committee's December 14 discussions:

- Importance of Progress 208 efforts to institutional finances
- UNA's continued status as the fastest growing university in the state
- Work underway by the Generative Artificial Intelligence Task Force to develop a proposed institutional policy
- Local economic impact from the Robotics/Trumbauer weekend and the University's implementation of the hy-flex model to help accommodate an unprecedented number of visitors/guests on campus

Mr. Abroms then presented items from this committee's meeting the preceding afternoon that were on the agenda for the full Board at today's meeting:

### **A. Review of Financial Information for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2023**

Though the FY 2022-2023 budget included a sizeable \$7.3 million deficit, the actual deficit at year end was only \$2.3 million due to mitigation measures in place throughout the year to help relieve budget pressure. Receipt of a \$17 million special state appropriation from surplus funds assisted with deferred maintenance and capital project needs. The year-end financial report was thoroughly reviewed in the committee setting. There were no questions, and this information item required no action by the Board.

### **B. Budgeting of Additional Funds Received During the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year**

Mr. Abroms briefly reviewed this information item that required no action by the Board. There were no questions concerning the report.

### **C. Resolution Authorizing Renovations to Stevens Hall**

Mr. Abroms noted in his summary comments that these renovations are necessary for accreditation compliance and have an associated cost in the \$1.5 million to \$2 million range. With the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Personnel Committee and upon motion by Mr. Abroms and second by Mr. Page, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

## **X. OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of other business to bring before the Board.

## XI. MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Trapp noted that an executive session was needed to discuss (a) proposed honorary namings matters from a Board committee and (b) the status of a legal issue. As an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of Alabama, Ms. Fite-Morgan could affirm that the Board's discussion of these matters in executive session was authorized under Section 3 of the Code of Alabama that allows for executive session to discuss the general reputation and character of individuals and the legal ramifications of pending litigation. Therefore, an executive session would be in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Upon motion by Mr. Russell, second by Mr. Buchanan, and a unanimous vote, the meeting recessed at 10:02 a.m. for a short break and to enter into executive session.

At approximately 10:10, the Board entered into executive session. Ms. Fite-Morgan, Mr. Haslam, Dr. Kinney, Dr. Looney, and Mr. Thornton remained in the room with Dr. Kitts and the Board during this closed session. In addition, the following external legal counsel joined the Board via videoconference for these discussions:

- Mr. Warren Matthews with Burr & Forman law firm in Birmingham, AL; and
- Mr. James Pennington and Mr. Gordon Blair with Ogletree Deakins law firm in Birmingham, AL

The Board reconvened in regular session at 10:39 a.m. Mr. Page presented two action items from the Advancement and University Relations Committee that were considered in executive session and viewed favorably by the Board:

### **Resolution Authorizing Honorary Naming of the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions Graduate Programs for Dr. Frenesi P. Wilson**

Upon motion by Mr. Page and second by Ms. Sanford, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

### **Resolution Authorizing Honorary Naming of the "Healthcare Heroes Plaza" on the University Campus**

Upon motion by Ms. Page and second by Mr. Pierce, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.


Mr. Trapp then presented an additional action item that stemmed from executive session discussions -- **Resolution Ratifying Formation of The 1830 Foundation as a Nonprofit Corporation in Support of the University of North Alabama.** Following summary comments in which he noted the many positives of an additional legal entity in support of University initiatives, upon motion by Mr. Pierce and second by Mr. Russell, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.


The Board had no other action items to present from its discussions in executive session.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

There being no other business to come before the Board, upon motion by Mr. Buchanan, second by Mr. Russell, and a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Approved March 15, 2024

  
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President Pro Tempore

  
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Secretary