

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**FLORENCE, ALABAMA**  
**9:00 a.m., Friday, March 14, 2025**

The Board of Trustees for the University of North Alabama met on Friday, March 14, 2025, in Banquet Hall C 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 February 21, 2025) 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 March 14. 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 to Trustees from the Governor's office in advance of the meeting under the date of March 4, 2025. On March 6, 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 9:00 a.m.

**I. INVOCATION**

At the invitation of Ms. Sanford, the opening invocation was offered by Jack Mann who leads the All Saints College Ministry.

**II. ROLL CALL**

President Kenneth D. Kitts called the roll, and the following members were present in the meeting room:

Trustee Marty Abroms  
Trustee Joel Anderson II  
Trustee Kyle Buchanan  
Trustee Wendell Gunn

Trustee Jim Page  
Trustee Steve Pierce  
Trustee Simpson Russell

Trustee Nancy Sanford  
Trustee Gary Smith  
Trustee Will Trapp

Ex officio member Governor Kay Ivey and Trustee Anne Whitaker were absent. A quorum of voting members was in attendance.

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

- Mr. Jason Cochran, Executive Director of Governmental Relations and Economic Development
- Dr. Minnette Ellis, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, and Executive Director for University Priorities
- Ms. Amber Fite-Morgan, General Counsel
- Mr. Kevin Haslam, Vice President for University Advancement
- Dr. Josh Looney, Athletics Director
- Dr. Brien Smith, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Mr. Evan Thornton, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
- Dr. K.C. White, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Dr. Doug Barrett, Interim Dean of the Sanders College of Business and Technology
- Dr. Vince Brewton, Dean of the Cole Honors College
- Ms. Cindy Conlon, Associate Vice President for Facilities Administration and Planning
- Ms. Michelle Eubanks, Director of University Media and Public Relations

- Dr. Andrea Hunt, 2024-2025 Faculty Senate President
- Dr. Katie Kinney, Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences
- Dr. Tera Kirkman, Dean of Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions
- Ms. Kerigan Mardis, 2024-2025 Student Government Association President
- Mr. Jeremy Martin, 2024-2025 Staff Senate President
- Mr. John McGee, Executive Director of Educational Technology Services
- Ms. Mandy McGinnis, 2024-2025 Student Government Association Vice President
- Dr. Amber Paulk, Deputy Provost and Board of Trustees Parliamentarian
- Ms. Regina Sherrill, Senior Assistant to the President for Administration
- Dr. Ryan Zayac, Interim Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering
- Newly elected Student Government Association (SGA) officers for next year:
  - Ms. Alex Rhoades, 2025-2026 President
  - Ms. Nicole Ballenger, 2025-2026 Vice President
  - Mr. Matt Hanback, 2025-2026 Treasurer
  - Ms. Kinsey Plunkett, 2025-2026 Secretary

Also present: *TimesDaily* reporter Bernie Delinski

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

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

### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: DECEMBER 6, 2024, QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING**

Mr. Trapp submitted the minutes from the previous meeting for consideration. Upon motion by Mr. Page and second by Dr. Gunn, the minutes as presented were approved 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:

- Governmental relations connections and issues at all levels -- local (upcoming municipal elections), state (Alabama Legislature's current budget deliberations), and federal (executive orders that impact higher education); confident UNA can navigate any challenges
- Enrollment update....record spring headcount, fall outlook based on current early indicators
- Continued successes in Advancement area and progress toward campaign goal
- Importance of keeping employee compensation at a competitive level

Dr. Kitts then called on Dr. Looney for a special recognition of the UNA men's basketball team that recently secured the first regular season conference championship for UNA in Division I. Team members, head coach Tony Pujol, assistant coaches, and support staff were invited into the meeting where they received a standing ovation for their many successes and noteworthy achievements this

season. Coach Pujol introduced each student athlete and gave brief comments about their dedication and hard work both inside and outside of the classroom. As they made their exit, Mr. Trapp made additional remarks about how the team represented UNA well, created much excitement for the athletics program, and generated expanded and positive media attention for the University.

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

As committee chair, Mr. Anderson highlighted topics covered in this committee's March 13 meeting, including:

- Faculty Senate initiatives
- Enrollment, including international student enrollment (representing 58 countries)
- Status of our ROTC program and strategies to boost the number of students who participate

Mr. Anderson then turned to action items that were on the agenda for the full Board at today's meeting:

### **A. Resolution Approving the Addition of a Public History Concentration to the Master of Arts in History Degree**

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

### **B. Resolution Approving a Postbaccalaureate Certificate in Teaching College English**

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

### **C. Resolution Approving the Addition of a Graduate Certificate in History Pedagogy with Tracks in U.S. History and Non-U.S. History**

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

Mr. Trapp pointed out that while these action items add concentrations and certificates to the curriculum, the University has shown that it is willing to trim certain academic offerings when necessary if there is insufficient student demand. These decisions – both additions and deletions – center around optimal use of institutional resources and the best academic preparation for students for their future careers.

## VII. ADVANCEMENT AND UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE MATTERS

As committee vice chair, Mr. Buchanan highlighted topics covered in this committee's March 13 meeting, including:

- Governmental relations matters and town/gown initiatives
- Historical perspective on significant accomplishments in University Advancement over the past 10 years....including substantial growth in:
  - Institutional endowment (from \$28.7 million to now almost \$64 million)
  - Total value of UNA Foundation assets (now at \$81.5 million)
  - Level of private gifts and commitments
  - Number of donor-funded scholarships
  - Number of seven-figure private gifts (19 received since 2020)

Mr. Buchanan also noted that two information items from the previous day's committee discussions – **Update on UNA Foundation and University Endowments** and **Annual Endowment Report for UNA Trustees Scholarship Fund** – were on the agenda for the full Board at today's meeting. There were no questions, and both of these had been reviewed in the committee setting the previous day.

## VIII. CAMPUS LIFE AND ATHLETICS COMMITTEE MATTERS

As committee chair, Mr. Pierce reported on topics covered during this committee's March 13 meeting. These included:

- Fraternities/sororities....number of service hours, funds raised for philanthropic projects, high overall GPA
- Cosmetic upgrades in Guillot University Center
- Increasing demand for campus housing as more students return to live on campus each year
- Recent SGA resolution that advocates for more parking on campus (with data to support the request for construction of an additional parking deck)
- Formation of a Bicentennial Planning Committee to mark UNA's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2030
- Strong support for various athletic teams
- Stadium construction update

Mr. Pierce then presented one action item from the Committee – **Resolution Adopting a Revised University "Free Speech and Assembly Policy."** With the recommendation of the Campus Life and Athletics Committee and upon motion by Mr. Pierce and second by Mr. Anderson, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

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

As committee chair, Mr. Abrams reported on topics covered in this committee's March 13 meeting, including current Staff Senate initiatives. On the agenda today for the full Board were:

**A. Review of Financial Information for Quarter Ending December 31, 2024**

Mr. Abroms reported that revenues are on track and expenditures are in line as would be expected for the first quarter of the fiscal year. The quarterly financial report was thoroughly reviewed in the committee setting. There were no questions, and this information item required no action by the Board.

**B. Resolution Approving Rental Rates in University-Owned Housing Facilities Effective Fall 2025**

Mr. Abroms described that the proposed housing rental rate increase of approximately 2% overall is necessary to offset rising costs, but the housing charges are very competitive with other universities. With the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Personnel Committee and upon motion by Mr. Abroms and second by Mr. Pierce, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

**C. Resolution Approving Contract Renewal between the University of North Alabama and Compass Group for Campus Services, including Student Meal Plan Prices Effective Fall 2025**

Mr. Abroms described the proposal for a 15-year contract renewal with the current campus food service provider. Some final details as to specific food options are still being negotiated. Proposed meal plan prices for next year are reflective of general inflation but represent only a modest increase. With the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Personnel Committee and upon motion by Mr. Abroms and second by Mr. Smith, the resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

**D. Resolution Authorizing and Supporting Facility Expenditures**

Mr. Abroms provided summary comments about several planned projects:

- Replacement of Mane Market roof
- Hiring of professional services to initiate design of a STEM/Engineering building
- Renovations of culinary arts area at East Campus
- Refresh of retail food vendor spaces in Gunn Commons building

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**

With this being their last Trustees meeting to attend in representing their constituency groups, Mr. Trapp expressed appreciation to Dr. Hunt and Ms. Mardis for the leadership of the Faculty Senate and SGA, respectively, this academic year.

Mr. Trapp noted that Ann Berry will join the Board of Trustees in July. She will assume the seat currently held by Dr. Gunn who did not seek reappointment.

Mr. Trapp then distributed a proposed action item – **Resolution Recognizing Kenneth D. Kitts on the Occasion of His Tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) Anniversary as President of the University of North Alabama** – and made comments commending Dr. Kitts’ leadership and noted his many accomplishments as we mark this 10-year milestone. The resolution was approved by applause and unanimous consent. As one of the Trustees who served on the presidential search committee in 2014, Mr. Russell gave additional remarks about how it is clear the right candidate (Dr. Kitts) was selected in that process, how Dr. Kitts has led the University well these past ten years, and how his leadership and influence contribute to the good working relationship with the Board of Trustees.

#### **XI. MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Trapp noted that an executive session was needed to discuss a matter from a Board committee and to hear updates on pending legal matters. 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. Anderson, second by Dr. Gunn, and a unanimous vote, the meeting recessed at 10:32 a.m. for a short break and to enter into executive session. At approximately 10:45, the Board entered into executive session. Ms. Fite-Morgan, Mr. Haslam, Dr. Smith, and Dr. White remained in the room with Dr. Kitts and the Board during this closed session.

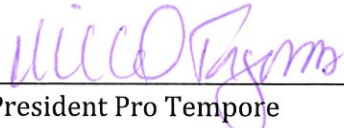
The Board reconvened in regular session at 10:55 a.m., at which time Mr. Trapp presented an action item from the Advancement and University Relations Committee that was considered in executive session and viewed favorably by the Board – i.e, **Resolution Authorizing Naming of “The Pantry” in Memory of Jesse Christopher James**. Upon motion by Dr. Gunn and second by Mr. Anderson, 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. Pierce, second by Mr. Buchanan, and a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

Approved June 13, 2025

  
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President Pro Tempore

  
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Secretary