



President's Communiqué
Dr. Ken Kitts
November 2, 2016

Colleagues: I hope this message finds you well. As we head into the last six weeks of the fall semester, I thought this would be a good opportunity to provide you with an update on important changes and developments of interest to our campus community.

Enrollment: With all data reported and locked, our final headcount for this fall was 7,492, an increase of 414 students over last year. As part of this record, UNA also welcomed a record freshman class, a record number of students living on campus, and a record number of graduate students. It is important to sustain this good momentum, and with that in mind we are monitoring registrations for Spring 2017. We budget for the fiscal year based on a projection that spring enrollment will be approximately 92% of fall enrollment (winter graduation always means lower numbers in the spring). Surpassing that mark will generate additional funding for items identified as priorities by the Strategic Planning and Budget Study Committee. Looking further ahead, the staff in the Office of Admissions is already working hard on the entering class of Fall 2017. We have a great opportunity to help that cause by showcasing our people and programs to prospective students at fall Preview Day this Saturday, November 5.

Searches: The search for the next VPAA and Provost is getting organized under the leadership of Dr. Brenda Webb, who has accepted my invitation to chair the search committee. Other committee members include the following: Dr. Dan Hallock, Dr. Scott Infanger, Dr. Katie Kinney, and Dr. Laura Williams (Faculty Senate Appointees); Dr. Matt Price (Staff Senate Appointee); Nick Smith (SGA Representative); Dean Vicki Pierce (COAD Representative); VP David Shields (EC Representative); and Dr. Terrance Brown, Leigh Stanfield, and Cassie Morgan (presidential appointees). We are working now to finalize the job advertisement with the goal of having it posted in the next few weeks. Stay tuned for updates and an invitation to meet candidates once we get to the campus interview stage. The search for the new VP for Business and Financial Affairs will begin early in the spring semester.

Budgetary Items: At its meeting in September, the UNA Board of Trustees approved a budget for FY 2017 that includes a cost-of-living adjustment of 3.0% for all regular faculty and staff who were on the payroll as of September 16, 2016. The COLA will take effect on December 1. In Montgomery, we are working with our local delegation and governmental relations representatives to make the case for an increase in state support for UNA during the 2017 legislative session. UNA remains well below the median in per-student funding from the state (\$4,951 here versus a median of \$6,721 across other Alabama universities for an annual deficit of \$9.7 million), and we all need to consider making that a polite and respectful talking point whenever we have the opportunity to speak with state lawmakers. *This is a matter of institutional equity, and it is of the highest importance for our future.* A funding gap of this magnitude directly impacts our ability to remain competitive, compensate our faculty and staff fairly, support our programs at an adequate level, and limit tuition increases. The legislative session begins on February 7 and will end in May.

SACS: Dr. Leah Graham of the Department of Politics, Justice, and Law has accepted an offer to become our SACS accreditation liaison upon the retirement of Ms. Celia Reynolds on December 31. Please join me in thanking Celia for her excellent work in ensuring our good standing with SACS and in welcoming Dr. Graham to this new role. As a reminder, our last reaffirmation by SACS occurred in 2012. Our fifth year Interim Report and QEP Impact Report are due in March 2018 with the next reaffirmation review scheduled for 2021-2022.

Winter Commencement: At commencement exercises on December 17, we will honor Rick Hall, founder of FAME Studios and the father of the “Muscle Shoals sound,” with a Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Our commencement speaker will be acclaimed author and music historian Peter Guralnick. Mr. Guralnick is the author of thirteen books, which include well-known biographies of Elvis Presley and Sam Cooke. Paramount Studios is using his most recent work, *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock ‘n’ Roll* (2015), as the basis for a major film project.

D-1 Athletics: In keeping with the commitment I announced last spring, AD Mark Linder and I have invested significant time and energy to bring closure to the questions surrounding our athletic classification. We have reengaged with our trustees on this issue and have taken stock of developments with conferences in our region. We also have worked with consultants and athletic officials at peer institutions to gain insight into questions about competitiveness, scheduling, and athletic funding models. As a result of these discussions, we now have a firmer basis with which to evaluate the options for UNA. Resolving this issue remains a high priority for us, as it has become a distraction that is taking attention away from the excellent work being done by our student-athletes and coaches. We will provide updates on this decision as circumstances warrant.

Miscellaneous: Demolition of the University Apartments on Circular Road is 50% complete. Construction of the new parking lot on that site will begin soon with an expected completion date of January 2017. Renovation of the Keystone Building is on schedule which should allow for the move of HES programs out of Floyd Hall and into that facility in December. Demolition of Floyd Hall and the subsequent start on Harrison Hall, home of the Anderson College of Nursing, will begin soon thereafter. With regard to campus dining options, Moe’s Southwestern Grill should open in the GUC during the first week of December with Panda Express scheduled to follow in January. Officers in the Division of Business and Financial Affairs will provide additional information on these and other enhancements to our food service options.

I hope you find this summary useful. If you have questions regarding these or other topics, please feel free to ask your EC representative or send an email to my office so we can direct you to the appropriate officer. Thanks for all you do for the University of North Alabama!