



President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts

July 2, 2020

Colleagues: Please see below for important updates from the University of North Alabama:

Pandemic / Campus Reopening: On June 26, Dr. Kimberly Greenway released the *Covid-19 Recovery Guidance Plan* to campus. I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Greenway and the members of the Covid-19 Recovery Task Force (CRTF) for the many hours they have put into this effort. Their inquiries and deliberations have been undertaken with the greatest care, and we all owe these colleagues a debt of gratitude for giving us a document that will serve as an excellent guide for the reopening of our campus and the resumption of traditional classes in the fall semester. The Executive Council has already acted to incorporate key Task Force recommendations into planning for the upcoming year. Please find time to read the report in its entirety. Similarly, I am very grateful to those who sat on the earlier Coronavirus Advisory Team that helped guide university decisions during the initial phase of the pandemic. Working together as a campus community, we are navigating this unprecedented challenge very well, and for that I give great credit to those who have given so generously of their time and expertise.

Commencement: The recent release of the report from the CRTF has given us additional information with which to refine our planning for the commencement ceremonies on July 31 and August 1. On those dates, we will honor both spring and summer graduates. After consultation with EC, COAD, and the CRTF, we have decided to amend the original plan and double the number of ceremonies in Norton Auditorium in order to allow each graduate to bring a limited number of guests with them. Significantly, the CRTF has reviewed and endorsed this new approach as being consistent with the campus recovery guidelines. The commencement plan includes temperature checks for all participants (including the president!), face coverings, and assigned seating for graduates and guests that meets social distancing requirements. Additional details on this plan will be forthcoming soon.

Building Names: I shared information with you last month about opportunities for faculty and staff to make their voices heard on the issue of building names at UNA. Acting on my request for specially called summer meetings, the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and SGA have all now considered and approved resolutions calling for the removal from campus buildings of names that do not align with our stated values. I will share those resolutions with the Board of Trustees. Any petition to the state for permission to remove a name requires action by the Board. Likewise, the conferral of any new name on a building is also a Board prerogative. Given these parameters, I am grateful that the trustees responded so quickly and favorably to my suggestion that we engage the shared governance system to provide for campus input. I am grateful as well for the responsiveness of the Shared Governance Executive Committee and individual Senate heads in organizing meetings and communicating with their members on this topic.

Budget: We continue to manage through the financial uncertainties born of the pandemic. I am heartened by the fact that we have been able to avoid budget cuts, furloughs, and layoffs. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that over 50,000 faculty and staff, including some in Alabama and at peer schools, have already suffered adverse employment actions because of the pandemic. The

state portion of our budget for FY 21 is now fixed at \$34.4 million, a small increase over the previous year, but a far larger share of our operating revenue for the coming year remains dependent on final enrollment outcomes for fall and on our ability to welcome students back to UNA for on-campus classes and the residential learning experience.

Enrollment: Summer enrollment has been nothing short of outstanding – up 20% over last year. Fall presents a different challenge, however, and although preliminary indicators for the coming academic year are encouraging, we are unlikely to see a significant increase in student headcount or credit hour production. Given the impact of the pandemic on higher education, a good outcome for any university this fall would be final enrollment that is comparable to last year and a corresponding budget that is flat (i.e., no decrease) in terms of net revenue. We have a chance of realizing both of these goals at UNA. However, a large budget deficit could result if we miss our enrollment targets or are unable to bring students back to campus. That’s why it is important to operate within the plan given us by the Covid-19 Recovery Task Force to bring about the reopening of campus for the fall term. What one unit or office does impacts others, and we must continue to work together to minimize health risks while simultaneously delivering the campus-based educational experience that our students want and deserve -- all while dealing with serious financial constraints and trying to guard against adverse employment impacts.

Construction / Facility Updates:

- Furniture should begin arriving for Harrison Hall next week. The final inspection for that building is scheduled to occur on July 15. If all goes smoothly, the certificate of occupancy will be issued soon thereafter which will pave the way for our long-anticipated move into that facility. It will be a welcome addition to our campus and a huge asset for the talented faculty and staff in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions.
- Last month, our Board of Trustees approved a plan for the restoration of Harrison Fountain using private funds from the insurance settlement and donor gifts. A new marble fountain based on the original design is now being carved in Italy and will ship soon. Demolition of the old fountain will begin next week with the goal of having the new one installed at or near the beginning of fall semester. Some related work in the pedestrian area of the plaza might have to be deferred until the Christmas break to minimize the disruption to that area when the students are back on campus.
- Under the heading of office moves, work in Collier Library is almost complete to allow for the move of the University Success Center to that location this month. Also, VP Ron Patterson and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will relocate to the third floor of Bibb Graves Hall within the next two weeks.

I want to close this communicate by commenting on the death of our beloved lion mascot, Una. I watched from my office yesterday as a steady stream of individuals made their way to the lion enclosure to pay their respects. Una will be remembered as a noble ambassador for our University. For Dena, the boys, and me, she was also a neighbor, and we count it as our honor to have known her these past five years.

Leo III is 17 years old but remains in good health. Anne and Dan Howard are committed to helping Leo through this period of adjustment and continuing to provide him with outstanding care. We can all take pride in the very special connection we have with our mascots and in the way the lions are cared for as important members of our campus community.

I hope you find this information helpful. As we look forward to better days, Dena and I want you to know how much we appreciate all you do for UNA!