July 29, 2019

Dear President Kitts:

Please find the University Stadium Workgroup's (USW) formal report concerning the questions that were presented February 14, 2019, in our initial meeting with you. The original questions presented to the USW may be found on page four.

The workgroup met numerous times during the course of the past five months, gathering information from the community, alumni, and students in order to formulate the final report. The USW worked diligently to provide relevant and germane information that will be useful to you as you seek to make a sound recommendation to the University stakeholders.

Speaking on behalf of the workgroup, for whom I served as the chairman, it was our pleasure to serve our University in this capacity. This final report is unanimously supported by each member of the USW. The future of the University is exciting, and if we can be of any help in the future, please let us know.

Respectfully submitted,
Timothy Morgan, Ed.D
USW Chairman
November 30, 2018

Dr. Kitts:

On November 12, 2018 a survey was sent out by the Student Government Association in an effort to collect student input on a variety of issues. The survey was completed by more than 1700 students before closing two weeks after the start date. One question was asked in regards to the potential of an on-campus soccer/football stadium. Students were asked, “Are you interested in the University exploring the possibility of an on-campus football/soccer stadium?” The question was asked because various members of SGA have expressed their own thoughts about the value that an on-campus stadium would add to the University of North Alabama community and wondered if the majority of campus felt the same way. I personally thought that the numbers would come back favorable for such a proposal since my own experience has lead me to believe that a sizable portion of campus is absolutely ecstatic at the thought than an on-campus stadium would even be a possibility, but even I did not know how positive the response on the survey would be.

Out of the 1778 students that answered this question, 1262 respondents or 70.98 percent answered in the affirmative. 271 respondents or 15.24 percent said no, and 245 respondents or 13.78 said that they were indifferent. This means that out of the survey participants that had an opinion on the issue, 82.32 percent said that they supported this proposal. Interestingly, when the data is broken down by class standing, gender, ethnicity, residency, or other demographic factors, the proportion of yes votes still remains very large. Assuming the sample collected is random, we can assert with 99 percent confidence that at least two thirds of students enrolled on campus would like to see the University explore this issue.

I firmly believe that this issue is one worth exploring. If there ever was a time for an on-campus UNA owned football/soccer stadium for the Lions to call our own, I think that time is now. A stadium would provide athletics with a much needed facility, but the benefits would not stop there. An on-campus stadium would provide UNA with a nice outdoor multi-use area that could seat thousands. Though these many uses could be explored, I will stick to my main issue for writing this letter.

Attached with this letter is a resolution that was passed unanimously by the Student Government Association Senate. It is the intention of the Senate to ask the University to create a workgroup to assess the feasibility of a stadium. We would like to know if an on-campus stadium is even possible. If so, what would it cost? We understand that the bulk of the funding would likely fall on the students. So for that reason, we would also like to request that this committee aid us in assessing student opinion on the issue as hard numbers materialize in regards to cost and details of the stadium itself. I personally look forward to hearing from you on the matter. I hope that you share many students’ excitement on the subject. Thank you for all that you do for the students of this University; I hope that I can count on your support in this initiative.

Respectfully,

Chase Holcombe
University of North Alabama
Student Government Association President
The University of North Alabama
Student Government Association

Resolution

Written by President Holcombe
Sponsored by Senator Maupin
Resolution: 18-11
11/29/18

Whereas; The Student Government Association thinks that an on-campus football/soccer stadium would add value to the student experience and increase school spirit at the University of North Alabama; and,

Whereas; An on-campus stadium could be used for a variety of purposes by the University of North Alabama; and,

Whereas; The University of North Alabama fields competitive soccer and football teams in Division I Athletics; and,

Whereas; A recent survey issued by the Student Government Association indicates with a high level of confidence that the majority of students at the University of North Alabama support the University exploring the feasibility of an on-campus stadium; and,

Whereas; The Student Government Association serves as the voice of the student body and would like to echo the students’ desire to see the possibility of an on-campus stadium explored;

Therefore; Let it be resolved that the Student Government Association requests that the University of North Alabama create a workgroup to explore costs and feasibility of an on-campus, multiuse football/soccer stadium; and,

Furthermore; The Student Government Association requests this workgroup to also assess opinion and gather feedback from students, alumni, and other stakeholders; and,

Furthermore; The Student Government Association kindly requests that this workgroup report their findings to the Student Government Association Senate;

Therefore; Let it be further resolved that copies of this resolution be sent to Dr. Kenneth Kitts, President; Dr. Kimberly Greenway, Vice President of Student Affairs; Mr. Mark Linder, Athletic Director; and Dr. Ross Alexander, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Passed and approved by the Student Government Association this 29th day of November, 2018

Signed: ____________________________
(President Chase Holcombe)

Signed: ____________________________
(Vice President of Senate Blake Polson)
The purpose of your group is to examine the feasibility of developing a University-owned and operated stadium that would serve as a competition/presentation home for UNA soccer, UNA football, and the UNA marching band, in addition to hosting other University and community events.

The study to be undertaken by your University Stadium Workgroup should address the following questions:

- What is driving student sentiment on this topic as expressed through the fall 2018 student survey and SGA Resolution 18-11? The USW may solicit input from other key stakeholder groups as it deems appropriate.
- What is the norm for stadium ownership, location, and capacity in FCS-level programs in Alabama and in area athletic conferences? What are the norms for our aspirational peers in the FCS top 10 programs?
- What are the risks involved with developing a UNA-owned and operated stadium? What are the risks involved with not doing so?
- If UNA were to decide to build a stadium, what considerations should be used to determine location? What capacity and amenities should the stadium feature? What would be the approximate cost of such a facility?
- What funding options could be explored to support development of a stadium? State-appropriated dollars should not be factored into this analysis.
1. What is driving student sentiment regarding this topic as expressed through the fall 2018 student survey and SGA Resolution 18-11? The USW may solicit input from other key stakeholder groups as it deems appropriate.

Students have expressed a desire for a stadium that would allow for multipurpose events, including, but not limited to, band competitions, football and soccer games, Spring Fling, movie nights, graduation, and other events on a UNA-branded field. Additionally, an on-campus stadium would allow for expanded and increased tailgating opportunities, which would bring visitors to campus and enhance enrollment. Students also expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of amenities at Braly Stadium. Specific concerns included a lack of tailgating opportunities, constricted traffic flow, an absence of UNA-themed branding, and insufficient access to the facility.

During the fall semester of 2018, the Student Government Association (SGA) sent a survey to all UNA students. Approximately 1,800 students responded to the survey. When asked about the possibility of a UNA-owned football/soccer stadium, a resounding 70 percent of respondents supported exploring the possibility; 15 percent were indifferent; and 15 percent were opposed to the concept. After analyzing the results, the SGA drafted a resolution to support the creation of a University Stadium Workgroup, or USW, tasked with investigating the possibility of a new stadium for UNA.

Two workgroup members, Grant Gunn and Chase Holcombe, conducted presentations among key student groups, including Fraternity and Sorority Life organizations, the SGA, and the LaGrange Society, as well as two open forums. Student engagement and feedback were measured and collected by the USW from the eight presentations. The groups were asked for their feedback on four topics – design, location, amenities, and funding – regarding the stadium concept.

The initial design and amenities, which includes additional on-campus parking, were favorably received by the majority of those who attended the meetings. Suggestions were documented and will be communicated with the architect should the concept move forward. The students clearly preferred building a stadium on campus. The students indicated that they would be more willing to help fund a stadium through a dedicated fee if it is built on campus. The extra parking that would be added to campus as part of the project was also well-received.

Approximately 70 percent of the almost 300 individuals who attended the presentations indicated they were comfortable with a $12/hour stadium fee. Approximately 73 percent were comfortable with a $10/hour stadium fee, while 86 percent were comfortable with an $8/hour stadium fee. Other stakeholders who expressed an interest in the stadium project include community members and alumni. At the Alumni Leadership Summit, for instance, Athletic Director Mark Linder presented on this topic, and the attendees expressed support as well as a desire to see the project move forward.
2. What is the norm for stadium ownership, location, and capacity in FCS-level programs in Alabama and in area athletics conferences? What are the norms for the University’s aspirational peers in the FCS Top 10 programs?

### Division I • Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Stadiums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>On Campus</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>AAMU</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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### Top 10 • Final National Ranking

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
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<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>North Dakota State</td>
<td>Fargo, ND</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>NO Fargo</td>
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<td>Eastern Washington</td>
<td>Cheney, WA</td>
<td>8,600</td>
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<td>South Dakota State</td>
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<td>YES SDSU</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>65M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Orono, ME</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>YES UM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennesaw State</td>
<td>Kennesaw, GA</td>
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<td>NO KSU Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weber State</td>
<td>Ogden, UT</td>
<td>17,312</td>
<td>YES WSU</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC Davis</td>
<td>Davis, CA</td>
<td>10,743</td>
<td>YES UCD</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colgate</td>
<td>Hamilton, NY</td>
<td>10,221</td>
<td>YES CU</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Madison</td>
<td>Harrisonburg, VA</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>YES JMU</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>62M</td>
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Average: 15,371

### Ohio Valley Conference

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Austin Peay</td>
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<td>Eastern Kentucky</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacksonville State</td>
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<td>Murray State</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>MSU</td>
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<td>Southeast Missouri State</td>
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<td>SEMO</td>
<td>1930</td>
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<td>Tennessee State</td>
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<td>69,143</td>
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<td>NFL Titans</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
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<td>YES</td>
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<td>1966</td>
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<td>8,000</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>UTM</td>
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Average: 20,495

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNA</td>
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<td>Florence City Schools</td>
<td>1949</td>
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3a. What are the potential risks involved with developing a UNA-owned and -operated stadium?

- UNA officials should reassure legislators that any increase in state funding will be used for academics and student services, not for the stadium project.
- If currently enrolled students opt for a fee to help fund a stadium, it would continue beyond the current cohort and could impact the cost of attendance for future students.
- If there is debt to be serviced on a stadium, UNA would need to continue to grow and maintain healthy credit-hour production in order to manage payments.
- Due to low state funding, the University could face limitations on its borrowing capacity.
- UNA officials should be proactive in stressing that the stadium project would not result in a diversion of funds away from academics.
- Good communication between UNA and Florence City Schools would continue to be important to maintain a strong relationship and minimize potential misconceptions. Discussions should include both the current shared use of Braly and plans for a new stadium.
- The development of a new stadium is based on the premise that football will continue to be a popular sport with the ability to draw large crowds.
- There is the potential community perception that Florence does not need a second football stadium.

LOCATION:
- Depending on site selection, there is a potential for a negative response from residents in surrounding neighborhoods.
- The development of an on-campus stadium would necessitate the relocation of the practice field used by the UNA Marching Band.

3b. What are the potential risks involved with not doing so?

UNA WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY IN BRALY STADIUM:
- UNA holds no ownership interest in that facility and is not building equity in Braly; therefore, it is difficult to justify investing the significant funds needed to modernize it.
- UNA contributes 50 percent of the operational expenses but does not account for an equivalent share of stadium use.
- A reduction in attendance and a worsening of the game-day experience could result from the lack of amenities and few visible improvements for students and the community fanbase.
- Recruitment of student-athletes is adversely affected by the use of an older high school stadium.
- The lack of a consistent UNA brand in the stadium negates the marketing opportunities for the University within the community and to our visitors.

A DECISION NOT TO DEVELOP A STADIUM WOULD RESULT IN MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:
- A new stadium would provide a venue for concerts, band competitions, and other events that could generate revenue on UNA’s campus, as well as serve as a means to increase campus visits for potential enrollment growth.
- A new stadium could generate revenue through concessions, retail sales, premium seating, naming rights, and skyboxes.
- An on-campus stadium would have the potential to invigorate campus life and assist with the recruitment of students.
- A new stadium with good parking could be used to host events other than UNA football and UNA soccer games. Such events could include, but are not limited to, band competitions, symphony performances, concerts, high school playoff games for football and soccer, UNA Preview Day, and UNA Spring Commencement.
- A new stadium would present an opportunity to enhance student engagement on campus and within the community.
4. If UNA were to decide to build a stadium, what considerations should be used to determine location? What capacity and amenities should the stadium feature? What would be the approximate cost of such a facility?

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOCATION:**
- Student sentiment
- Cost of land
- Proximity to campus,
- 13-15 acres needed for stadium
- Safety

Students involved in the discussion groups placed a high priority on having a stadium on campus. The addition of parking at UNA from an on-campus stadium was also well-received by the student groups. Further, students indicated they would be more eager to fund an on-campus stadium so that the stadium could be used for other university and community-based events.

**POTENTIAL LOCATIONS DISCUSSED:**
- **On-campus** - Land owned by UNA; students expressed strong support for this option.
- **ECM Property** - Land owned by Florence City and Lauderdale County; initial response by citizens was not favorable.
- **Foundry (Sweetwater)** - Land owned by a private citizen who would consider a long-term lease to UNA; a lack of parking at this site could be a concern.
- **West Florence off Cypress Creek** - Land owned by a private citizen who would donate needed acreage to UNA; access could be problematic because of the natural topography of the site, but land is plentiful.
- **TVA Property** - Land owned by the Muscle Shoals Holding Company of Knoxville, Tennessee; terms are unknown at the time of reporting.

**AMENITIES:**
- Keep the fan experience at the forefront with the overall design;
- Increase dining options for events and campus;
- Designate spaces for vendors, including food trucks and local restaurants;
- Include communal areas in the plaza, which would allow for tailgating as well as televisions, which would allow for social interaction;
- Consider potential alcohol sales and responsible consumption;
- Create fan shop and UNA sports history area;
- Establish dining areas for quick food options for campus and community;
- Consider potential classroom building included in stadium;
- Create Lettermen’s Club for all former student-athletes;
- Include club level, skyboxes with garage doors, common spaces, and a patio;
- Design concepts reminiscent of minor league baseball teams, which focus on open concepts;
- Brand with UNA logos and UNA-themed colors;
- Utilize built-in parking of 3,500 current spaces and another 300 spaces on campus upon completion of the project.

**CAPACITY:** 10,000 - 12,000 seats. Design should include expansion opportunities.

**ESTIMATED COST:** $25M - $30M

**OTHER NOTES:** Depending on site selection and design, consideration could be given for a stand-alone soccer field and a three-lane track in anticipation of future growth. This would provide a dedicated space for the soccer program, intramural program, and potential future addition of men’s and women’s track programs.
5. What funding options could be explored to support development of a stadium?
State appropriated dollars should not be factored into this analysis.

Approximately 300 students were polled as part of the USW-led presentations to on-campus and at-large groups during the spring of 2019. A majority of the students attending the presentations indicated a willingness to pay a fee ranging between $8 and $12 per credit hour to support development of a stadium:

- 86 percent were comfortable with an $8/hour fee.
- 73 percent were comfortable with a $10/hour fee.
- 70 percent were comfortable with a $12/hour fee.
- 13 percent were not in favor of using a fee to construct a stadium.

The USW suggests an additional survey, that includes a firm stadium location, be conducted regarding the fee-for-funding option.

With student involvement, the USW believes the University has the capacity to engage in this project. The stadium could serve as a key component of ongoing recruitment and retention efforts and be a critical tool in future enrollment. The USW believes a new stadium would create an exciting environment to showcase the soccer, football, and marching band programs. Further, a new stadium would provide a great social experience and allow for increased community engagement.

Finally, members of the USW, who are engaged in different social circles throughout the Shoals, have received overwhelming positive support for the idea of UNA developing its own stadium. The members believe this support could translate into private gifts, naming rights, and retail space(s) needed to support this project. To that end, the USW supports the idea of creating a three-dimensional rendition (model or video) of the stadium design to show students, alumni, corporate, and other donors.

CONCLUSION:

While the USW has not been tasked with providing the University a final recommendation, the excitement among students, alumni, and community as these discussions have unfolded simply cannot be denied. The time is right for this discussion to continue, and we strongly suggest that the University take steps to continue this decision process so that momentum for this project is not lost.