



## President's Communiqué

### Dr. Ken Kitts

### February 28, 2018

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**Colleagues:** Please see below for updates on developments and activities of interest to our campus community.

**Enrollment:** Census date for spring semester was Monday, February 5, and we closed the books with the second highest spring headcount in our history at 6,834 students. More importantly, we met and exceeded our budgetary goal of capturing a fall-to-spring persistence rate of at least 90% in credit hours. Our actual CHP carryover rate was a robust 91.3%. These are encouraging numbers, and a strong spring semester often portends enrollment success for the upcoming year. Looking ahead to Fall 2018, our data tracking indicates we are running ahead of the same date last year with regard to freshman applications and acceptances.

**Naming Ceremony:** All members of the UNA family are cordially invited to attend a very special event at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 14. On that date, we will name the Commons for our distinguished alumnus Dr. Wendell W. Gunn ('65). A native of Tuscomb, Dr. Gunn's journey as the first African-American student to enroll at Florence State College has been well-chronicled. He now lives in Connecticut but travels back to campus frequently. During these visits, one of Dr. Gunn's favorite stops is the Commons, where he enjoys watching students from diverse backgrounds interact with one another. That observation, coupled with Wendell's character, record of professional accomplishment, and love of his *alma mater*, are the factors that led us to bring this naming recommendation to the UNA Board of Trustees. The naming ceremony is a great opportunity to celebrate Dr. Gunn and to underscore our values as an institution. Please stay tuned for additional information regarding a later ceremony to name the Science, Engineering, and Technology Building for the late Dr. Mitchell Burford, Jr. (UNA '51).

**Special Commendations:** This year marked the first release of K-12 district and school report cards by the Alabama Department of Education. Topping the list in the Shoals region is UNA's own **Kilby Laboratory School** with a score of 99 and overall grade of A. Kilby is operated by UNA's College of Education and Human Sciences in cooperation with the Lauderdale County School District. Students at Kilby scored 100% on the two academic components of the rating. The overall numerical score places Kilby in the top 2% of all public schools in the state of Alabama. In other news, the *Birmingham Business Journal* reported last month that the **UNA College of Business** is home to the largest MBA program in the state of Alabama. This is the second year in a row that UNA has topped this list, and the enrollment growth in the College of Business has been nicely complimented by the qualitative enhancement that came with AACSB accreditation in 2016. Congratulations to our colleagues in the College of Business and the College of Education and Human Sciences on these achievements.

**Diversity Survey:** Provost Ross Alexander recently shared an email asking faculty, staff, and students to participate in a diversity survey. This questionnaire, designed by faculty experts, will be used to assess attitudes and experiences of our campus community on this crucial topic. Provost Alexander reports that, while faculty and staff participation in the survey has been strong, we need to encourage more of our students to join in this effort. Please assist by encouraging our students to complete the survey.

**Budget for FY 19:** The Governor's budget recommendation for FY 19, released on January 11, proposed an increase of 3.48% in the base appropriation for all public universities in Alabama. Because UNA is last in the state in per-student funding, an across-the-board increase of this type would only increase the dollar gap that separates us from other institutions. The budget recommendation approved by the Alabama House of Representatives on February 20 was kinder to UNA (a reflection of our Project 208 lobbying efforts). The House budget places UNA at the top of the list of public universities with a proposed increase of 5.13%. It is important to note that this percentage increase is only a recommendation, and a preliminary one at that. Budget deliberations are now underway in the Senate, with additional action yet to come from a conference committee and the Governor (again). As this budgetary process plays out, rest assured we are pulling out all stops to make sure UNA's voice is heard in Montgomery as never before. Our Project 208 objective of getting our state funding on a more equitable basis remains a strategic priority of the highest order. Assuming we are able to secure additional funding, I have asked VP Evan Thornton to plan for a special bonus or COLA for full-time faculty and staff. The details of any enhancement along those lines will be dependent on the final state appropriation for FY 19 and enrollment for the upcoming fall term.

**Faculty/Staff Open Forum:** I would like to extend my gratitude to all those who participated in yesterday's open forum with the Executive Council. We had a good, open, and candid discussion on a variety of topics at UNA. Special thanks is due to Dr. Lee Renfro and her colleagues on the Shared Governance Executive Committee for helping to solicit questions and organize the event. Lori Eastep in the Office of the President assisted with logistics and planning. We will continue to encourage opportunities such as this one to discuss issues, exchange ideas, and support shared governance at the University of North Alabama.

In closing, please know that Dena and I notice and appreciate the many ways in which our faculty and staff help make UNA such a special place. We try to attend as many events as our schedules will permit – all the while raising two young boys and striving for balance between family and work commitments. To all, know that we value your efforts and thank you for all you do for the University of North Alabama.