



## President's Communiqué

**Dr. Ken Kitts**  
**April 28, 2020**

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**Colleagues: I hope this message finds you safe and well. See below for important updates from the University of North Alabama:**

**COVID-19 Response:** We hope and expect to be able to resume traditional classes and to provide a residential experience for our students in Fall 2020. With that expectation in mind, I have created a COVID-19 Recovery Task Force under the leadership of Vice President Kimberly Greenway for the purpose of evaluating what actions are needed as we prepare for the reopening of campus and the eventual restart of face-to-face classes. The group's work will revolve around safety and health considerations for students, faculty, and staff. The Shared Governance Executive Committee has endorsed the establishment of this group, and recommendations from the SGEC helped shape its composition. Dr. Greenway will share information soon regarding the task force's charge and final membership roster. In related news, Governor Kay Ivey announced today a plan for the staged relaxation of social distancing mandates that went into effect in Alabama on April 4. We are in discussions now to determine what that means for campus operations and employee work schedules. Until you are notified differently by University officials, please continue on the same work schedule/arrangement you have been using for the past month.

**Summer Sessions:** Summer classes begin at UNA on May 11. With the support of leaders from across campus, UNA became the first university in Alabama to announce, on March 30, the continuation of the online-only format for all upcoming summer sessions in 2020. Almost all other universities have since followed suit, but the early decision enabled us to gain a competitive advantage in planning and marketing our summer courses. Consequently, I am pleased to report that we are running well ahead (currently up over 10% in registrations) of last summer's record enrollment in the daily point-to-point comparisons. This is good news for UNA, and it underscores the need for us to continue to think broadly and creatively about ways to enhance enrollment amid the many challenges presented by this pandemic.

**Tuition:** There will be no tuition increase for Fall 2020. As a formal matter, the decision on tuition belongs to the Board of Trustees and becomes official when the trustees vote on our budget for the upcoming fiscal year. However, I have already spoken with Board officers, and there is broad consensus that we all need to do our part to help students and families who are struggling during this economic downturn. The announcement on tuition is now being shared on social media and will be communicated to prospective students for the entering class of 2020. In terms of quality and affordability, UNA remains one of the great value propositions in higher education. The task for us is to make sure that everyone gets that message!

**Administrative Reorganization / Diversity:** As previously announced, Ms. Joan Williams will be leaving UNA on May 5 for a promotional opportunity at Salisbury University. I know you join me in thanking Joan for her advocacy for our students and many years of dedicated service as head of the Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity. The pending vacancy in that office provides an opportunity to act now on a key recommendation in UNA's new *Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan*. Effective with Joan's departure, Ron Patterson's title will change from "Chief Enrollment Officer and Assistant to the President for Diversity" to "Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" so that he can assume direct responsibility for ODIE while continuing to oversee the Presidential Mentors Academy. Other offices will be added soon to Ron's portfolio of responsibilities in overseeing our diversity efforts. Enrollment Management will move from Mr. Patterson to Provost Ross Alexander, a transition that will allow us to forego the hiring of an administrator to oversee EM offices. Ross' title will be reconfigured as "Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs" to reflect the new scope of his duties. All of the aforementioned changes can be accommodated within existing budgetary allocations, and the net result will be to streamline our administrative efforts, strengthen our University in key areas, and enhance efficiency.

**Budget for FY 21:** Leaders of the Alabama Legislature announced last week that they will attempt to resume the 2020 session on May 4. Under the state's Constitution, the session must end by May 18. Accordingly, there will be very little time to finalize budgets and address the backlog of other issues once the session resumes. It appears likely that Governor Ivey will have to call a special session for later in the summer -- and prior to the start of the new fiscal year on October 1. The good news is that we continue to receive reports that proration (immediate spending cuts) is not likely for the current fiscal year. However, the outlook for FY 21 remains clouded as revenue projections for the upcoming year are in decline. Fall enrollment remains an even more important variable for our budget. Special thanks to the many faculty and staff who have volunteered for training to assist with outreach to prospective students. In many ways, the single most important question for our University from a budgetary standpoint is whether we will be able to welcome students back to our campus this fall. UNA will be well-prepared to do so; however, we cannot control external factors that may have a bearing on this question. Given the amount of uncertainty regarding the budget for FY 21, it is necessary to exercise caution in making decisions on current expenditures and long-term financial commitments. I have asked Vice President Evan Thornton to delay the internal budgeting process as long as possible in hopes that economic conditions will improve and give us greater clarity about University revenues in the upcoming year.

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!