



## President's Communiqué

Dr. Ken Kitts

July 3, 2025

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**Colleagues:** As we move past the mid-point of the summer break, I hope you are all finding time to relax and enjoy family time. Please see below for some brief updates on developments and notes of interest at the University of North Alabama.

**Construction:** Campus construction projects are on schedule with: 1) the development of the new residence hall on Pine Street; 2) the implementation of the second phase of construction at Bank Independent Stadium; 3) the renovation of the Memorial Amphitheater; and 4) repairs to the south exterior of the George Lindsey Theatre. Also in progress are cosmetic upgrades to Stevens Hall and planning for the new parking lot at the intersection of Cedar Street and Waterloo Road. We are also close to making a final decision on the location for the new STEM/Engineering Building. Finally, stay tuned soon for some very exciting and long-awaited news on the development of the Pine Street corridor.

**Special Studies/Reviews:** I have now met with leaders from two important ad hoc groups that met over the course of the last academic year: The Work Group to Enhance Music and Fine Arts, and The Special Committee on Live Lions. After discussing findings and recommendations from those respective undertakings, I am working with members of my executive team to plan next steps. I will have more to say on both of these topics at the beginning of fall semester.

**Trees and Storm Damage:** We have finished making structural repairs and clearing the trees and large branches that were damaged during the severe weather we experienced this past spring. Although not directly linked to that effort, we also removed the large oak tree that had stood for years at the right entrance to Cramer Way. The tree was old, beautiful, and a great source of shade, but unfortunately some of its largest branches had died and were threatening high traffic walkways in the area.

**Athletics:** There continue to be major changes in the national landscape of college athletics, including the recent decision by a federal judge to approve the much-discussed *House vs. NCAA* settlement. Closer to home, our own Atlantic Sun Conference Commissioner, Jeff Bacon, has announced a strategic alliance between the ASUN and the Western Athletic Conference. The five current football-playing ASUN members, including UNA, will move to the WAC on July 1, 2026, which will rebrand as the United Athletic Conference. Seven of the eight future UAC members have been competing together as football-playing members since 2023 and will expand the UAC alliance to include all sports. Confused? Don't be. Even with this move, we will remain aligned under the leadership of Commissioner Bacon and continue to compete with many of the institutions we have been playing since our move to Division I – only now we will be doing so within a newly configured structure that will increase efficiency and protect our institutional interests going forward. I have asked Dr. Josh Looney to plan a special forum for early in the fall semester to provide additional details on these topics.

**Enrollment Outlook:** Looking ahead to fall term, we continue to track ahead of last year's record enrollment in both headcount and credit hour production. The Enrollment Management team is doing a great job of monitoring developments to ensure that trend holds up through August. Our incoming freshman class is especially healthy, and international enrollment appears to be robust once again. With regard to the latter, however, it bears mentioning that the visa granting process is moving more slowly than in past years which could affect final numbers in that sector. As always, we'll control what we can control and hope for the best with all other factors in play.

**UNA in the News:** We recently received welcome news that UNA has been named to the top tier of the "Opportunity Colleges and Universities: Highest Access and Highest Earnings" classification by the Carnegie Foundation and the American Council on Education. This distinction represents an outstanding commentary on the great work going on across campus by our faculty, staff, and students. It aligns well with our institutional mission and identity. It also dovetails nicely with the recent release of ACHE data which shows our University as a state leader in increasing the number of college graduates. Over the last decade, we are up 75% in the total number of graduates from UNA. That impressive data point sits at the intersection of enrollment growth, record retention and graduation rates, and the expansion of our academic portfolio.

**Kilby Laboratory School:** In case you missed it, recent media reports have reported on the ranking of the state's elementary schools based on reading scores posted this past spring by second and third grade students. Our very own Kilby Laboratory School is listed as one of the "elite eleven" schools in Alabama in which 100% of students are reading at or above grade level. Congratulations on this achievement to the faculty and staff of Kilby and the College of Education and Human Sciences, as well as to the Kilby Cubs who posted those amazing results.

**Important Dates:**

- July 29: Last Day of Classes for Summer II (Final Exams on July 30)
- August 1: Summer Commencement Ceremonies (Address by Dr. Chris DaSambiagio-Moore)
- August 13-16: Campus Housing Move-In
- August 19: Annual Faculty and Staff Meeting, 2:00 PM in Norton Auditorium
- August 20: Fall Classes Begin

Finally, please remember that the University will be closed tomorrow in observance of Independence Day. Dena and I wish you the very best and look forward to seeing you soon!