



## President's Communiqué Dr. Ken Kitts March 18, 2020

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### Special Note on UNA's Response to COVID-19:

I would like to begin this update by addressing the topic that is on everyone's mind, which is the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on our campus, region, and country. That issue looms so large that it seems almost unfitting to address it here alongside other, more routine, matters in this communiqué. Yet it is important to affirm that our University remains in operation despite the challenges of the last few weeks.

Yesterday I shot a video that was uploaded to UNA's website that we are taking to deal with the coronavirus challenge. The video is capturing all of that. I encourage you to check it frequently.

For now, I simply want to let you know that the plan we set in motion last Sunday appears to be working well. My thanks to each of you for the hard work, good ideas, cooperation, and patience that have helped us make necessary adjustments to campus life and our educational delivery systems. I certainly share the hope that these dislocations will be temporary. Our plan is to get through spring break and then take stock of all developments and make decisions about campus operations for the remainder of spring semester.

Whatever those decisions might be, I want you to know that this great University will endure, just as it has for the better part of the past two centuries. Resilience is part of our institutional DNA. We must embrace that heritage, continue to link arms to meet this challenge, and let the world know that UNA is open for business and is more committed than ever to our mission of changing lives one student at a time.

**State Budget:** The prospects for a significant increase in UNA's state appropriation for FY 21 were looking very good as of early March. In her executive budget, Governor Ivey recommended UNA for an increase of almost 15% (about \$4.9 million in new money) over the current fiscal year, compared with an average increase of 6% for all other public universities. This recommendation is a direct result of our Project 208 efforts in Montgomery. Now, however, there is grave concern in Montgomery about the slowdown of the economy and possible loss of tax revenue. All budgetary deliberations for FY 21 are moving very slowly as lawmakers seek a better understanding of what the future holds for state tax receipts.

**UNA Board of Trustees:** Two new trustees for the UNA Board have been appointed by Governor Ivey and confirmed by the Alabama Senate. Nancy Sanford resides in Sheffield and is a 1978 graduate of UNA. She retired last year as Executive Director of the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. Jim Page resides in Tuscaloosa and is a 2001 graduate of UNA. He serves currently as President of the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce. Sanford and Page will assume their seats on the Board of Trustees on October 1, 2020.

**Spring Commencement:** We have confirmed speakers for spring commencement ceremonies. Our own Dr. Ernestine Davis, retired professor of nursing and founder of the Presidential Mentors Academy, will speak to ACON-HP and COEHS graduates at the ceremony on Friday, May 8. Congressman Robert Aderholt – whose 4th district includes many of our key feeder areas including Colbert, Lawrence, and Franklin Counties – will address graduates at the two ceremonies (COAS and COB) that follow on Saturday, May 9. As relates to our COVID-19 action plan, this schedule assumes that the University is able to return to a normal schedule, or at least accommodate these large gatherings, by early May.

**Diversity and Inclusion Plan:** Our new "*Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan: 2020-2025, Model for Academic Excellence Through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*" was approved by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on March 6. The plan provides an excellent guide for our future efforts in areas ranging from student life to organizational structure to employment. The document is available online at <https://www.una.edu/vpem/diversity/>. My thanks to the members of the task force who helped bring this plan to life.

**Campus and Facilities:** Work on Laura M. Harrison Hall, future home of Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions, is now far enough along to appreciate the beauty of the building and the difference it will make.