

University Acquires School Property

Last month UAH completed a significant addition to its campus when it acquired title to the neighboring University Place School (UPS) property from the Huntsville City Board of Education. This 23-acre tract fronts on University Drive and is located to the north and east of the campus, adjoining it on two sides. Because of its strategic location, the University has been interested in owning it for many years.

Although the parties had in the past discussed a possible UAH purchase, differing views of the value of the property had prevented them from pursuing the matter further. Other issues included the Board of Education's need to continue to occupy and use the property until an alternate school facility could be made available to accommodate UPS students. This time President Altenkirch and Dr. Casey Wardynski, the Superintendent of the Huntsville City Schools, were able to negotiate a price, \$4.7 million, that was acceptable to both the School Board and the University of Alabama Board of Trustees. The issue of the timing of the transfer of title was initially resolved in the contract of sale, which was approved and executed last Fall, by deferring the closing on the property until October 2014. At the option of the Board of Education, provision was made to extend the closing for an additional four years.

Recently, the parties decided to accelerate the closing date, and on July 9, the Board of Education delivered to the University a deed to the property. The UAH Foundation provided financial assistance to the University with respect to the purchase price, in the form of a loan. The Board of Education's current need for the property was satisfied by a "lease back" of the school facility and most of the grounds for a period of several years. The Board has stated that it intends to renovate or rebuild Terry Heights School and have it ready for UPS students by the Fall of 2015, at which time the lease will be terminated. The University, in the meanwhile, has plans to expand parking options by constructing a new parking area on part of the newly acquired UPS property not included in the lease. Also planned are improvements to the entrance to the campus from University Drive, similar to those constructed several years ago for the Sparkman Drive entrance.

The UPS property, because it is contiguous to University property and is not separated by any natural barriers or roadways, has represented for some time the best option for a substantial expansion of the campus. In acreage, it is the largest addition to the campus since the earliest years of the institution. While full use of the property will be delayed for several years, it will eventually provide room for growth of the University and expansion of its facilities. Acquisition of this property constitutes a notable achievement for President Altenkirch and a very positive development for the future of this campus.