

**Dr. David B. Williams**  
**Statement to Trustees**  
**March 14, 2007**

I'd like to start by thanking the faculty, staff and students of The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Chancellor Portera, Board of Trustees and all the UA system for their confidence in me. It is a great honor and distinction for me to be nominated to be President of this university and, if confirmed, I look forward to both the challenges and the opportunities that await us.

I'd also like to thank the search committee and the search firm for their work. I have served on similar committees many times and know only too well what it takes to do the job well; from our side of the search experience, Margie and I were always kept informed and looked after at all stages; everything was handled most professionally and efficiently. A lot of the credit I'm sure must go those behind the scenes such as Sally Brown, Mary Beth Walker and Michael Bownes and I'd like to thank them publicly for their hard work.

Before I talk about my philosophy of education, scholarship and leadership management let me give a brief personal background summary;

We are an immigrant family; I was born and raised in Leeds in the UK and went to Cambridge University. Margie was born in the Netherlands, her family emigrated to Australia to escape the political turmoil of post-war Europe, she returned to the Netherlands after graduating from Sydney University then came to Cambridge where we were married just prior to our coming to this country in 1976 (she's had a much more interesting life than me!). As immigrants, we value the opportunity that this country has given us and we have both worked hard to give back what we can to our community and to our educational institutions.

My family is full of educators: both my parents, my wife and our first son; I was the first in my family to go to a university. I came by my final profession via a series of educational failures which taught me the value of planning ahead, always having an alternative plan, tenacity in pursuing the plans, building on your own strengths and, most importantly, enjoying what you do because you are doing what you are good at.

So let me summarize my what I see as the key factors that define excellence in universities:

A balance between outstanding teaching and first-rate scholarship is what distinguishes an excellent university from a mediocre one, and many UAH faculty members have a clear record of success in both areas. To further enhance academic excellence, the President and senior administration must understand and value the criteria required for success and free the faculty to pursue them.

The following list summarizes my **research philosophy**:  
Research and Education are two sides of the same coin.

- Leading scholars must be aggressively recruited, rewarded, supported and protected from predatory hiring by other institutions.
- The best research programs must be strongly encouraged, invested in continuously and used as examples to help nucleate new centers of excellence
- Successful new research programs arise when creative faculty collaborate, and when administrators enable and encourage such collaboration
- Research must be fully integral to the university's teaching mission
- Cross-disciplinary research is integral to the university and recognition for research outside traditional departmental boundaries, including entrepreneurial excursions, must be ensured
- Major research thrusts should partner, where appropriate, with leading universities, industries, national laboratories, community colleges and school districts, to maximize the potential for federal leverage, state support and the driving of local and regional economic development

My **educational philosophy** mirrors much of my research philosophy:

- The best professors must also be aggressively recruited, amply rewarded, fully supported, tenured and promoted early when appropriate and carefully protected against predatory recruiting from other organizations
- Oral and written communication skills must be woven into all curricula
- Education should be a diverse, global and cultural experience; while study abroad is one obvious way to achieve this goal, much can be provided on campus via international faculty and students, visiting professorships and invited speakers
- Learning opportunities are present in all facets of the university, not just classroom
- Education partnerships with other institutions (just like research partnerships) should be explored, especially when they complement existing degree programs
- Students today have different strengths and weaknesses to previous generation: we should build on their strengths, not bemoan their weaknesses
- Many students are inherently entrepreneurial; often more so than their teachers. Those with this attribute should be sought out and encouraged to explore their visions.

My **management philosophy** is simple:

- Listen first and speak second
- Extract consensus where possible but make decision despite lack of such
- Explain decision when made
- Take the responsibility for decision if/when controversy arises

In working with others, I try to:

- Find the best people, convince them to work with me and get out of their way
- Reward excellence, encourage independence, give freedom to make decision and expect responsibility in return

I have generally hired well and I have successfully encouraged departures where appropriate. In contrast, my experience also tells me that I find it difficult to delegate all I should, I am prone to worry about factors beyond my control and I can always improve my ability to take criticism and become better at tempering my enthusiasm with reticence. On that note, I'll bring this to a close.

I think it is appropriate to end this short statement by acknowledging and thanking President Frank Frantz for all the work that he and his team have done in transforming UAH from a small commuter campus to a much more residential, nationally recognized, financially stable, research university. The magnitude of this task must have been overwhelming but the results are outstanding and the university is now poised to decide on the next steps that it must take to *continue* transforming itself – an on going task that all educational institutions *must* do if they are to succeed.

Once again, thank you for giving me this marvelous opportunity.