



MEMORANDUM

TO: R. Michael Banish, President  
Faculty Senate

FROM: Robert A. Altenkirch, President *Robert A. Altenkirch*  
Christine Curtis, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic  
Affairs *Christine Curtis / PCA*

RE: Response to Senate Resolution SR-2016/2017-1,  
Notification to Senate on Deanship

DATE: November 21, 2016

Senate Resolution SR-2016/2017-1, entitled Notification to Senate on Deanship, requests that the Faculty Senate be notified when The University of Alabama in Huntsville is considering creating a new Deanship. A number of reasons are given for making this request, including a number that are tied to events that date back to the time of the Great Recession.

During and since the Great Recession, higher education throughout the nation has faced challenges heretofore unprecedented. Although state funding as a percentage of the overall public university budget had been decreasing for several decades, state funding was still a major source of revenue for public institutions. During the Great Recession and its aftermath, public institutions in Alabama and many other states saw budget reductions from the state and then stagnant budgets at a lower, unsustainable level.

Institutions employed different strategies to address the lower amount of state funding: there were layoffs, furloughs, budget reductions, and even some closures; some public institutions immediately decreased enrollment while others increased enrollment. Although most public institutions and their faculty and staff felt the ill-effects of the Great Recession and its aftermath, most public institutions tried to minimize the damage of reduced budgets on the university and the education of students and figured out ways to survive. Some have even thrived.

Now nearly eight years after the end of the Great Recession in June 2009, our university's unrestricted funding sources are primarily from state appropriations, tuition,

and fees. State funding is most likely to remain steady, and increases in tuition and fees are most likely to be modest, which means that increasing enrollment is the primary source of new revenue and the driver for achieving our institutional goals.

In 2013, as an institution we implemented our strategic plan, Expanding Horizons, developed with faculty, staff, student, alumni, and community involvement, where we set out a number of actions designed to move UAH from surviving to thriving. We developed a mission statement that actuates what we do:

“Our mission is to explore, discover, create, and communicate knowledge, while educating individuals in leadership, innovation, critical thinking, and civic responsibility and inspiring a passion for learning.”

We created a vision that takes us beyond where we are to where we want and need to be:

“The University of Alabama in Huntsville will be a preeminent, comprehensive, technological research-intensive university known for inspiring and instilling the spirit of discovery, the ability to solve complex problems, and a passion for improving the human condition – a university of choice where technology and human understanding converge.”

We have goals that touch each facet of our mission and priorities that enhance our ability to grow: intellectually by giving our students enhanced educational opportunities, physically in terms of student enrollment and facilities, scholarly in research and creative activities, and in stature of our faculty and institution. Our priorities as stated in the strategic plan are:

*Priority: Recruit and retain an outstanding and diverse student body of broad interests and of sufficient size to ensure a rewarding campus life experience*

*Priority: Recruit, develop, and retain an outstanding and diverse faculty and staff*

*Priority: Broaden and expand the research portfolio*

*Priority: Be a recognized leader in selected areas of education and research: Aerospace and Systems Engineering; Biotechnology; Cybersecurity and Big Data; Earth, Atmospheric, and Space Science; and Gaming and Entertainment Arts*

*Priority: Engage more fully our stakeholders: alumni, the community, elected officials, and global partners*

UAH has followed the priorities delineated in the strategic plan: we have established colleges, departments, and programs to increase and diversify student quality and enrollment, to recruit, retain, and diversify our faculty, to expand our research portfolio into new areas and additional extramural funding sources, to place resources into educational and research areas that respond to the needs of our constituencies, and to participate actively in the community and be a vital community partner.

The deanships that have been established since 2013 have related directly to our priorities and have been substitutions for previous positions. For example: The Dean of Education replaced the Chair of the Department of Education. Enrollment in the Department of Education was falling to the point of not being viable. While low in the fall of 2007, it declined 70% more by the fall of 2013. Creating the College of Education and transforming the position of Chair of the Department of Education to Dean of the College of Education has resulted in enrollment growing 250% from the fall of 2013 to the fall of 2016. The College of Education now has new academic programs with a healthy, growing enrollment and with increased diversity of disciplines and research areas. New faculty were hired to teach and research in these fields.

The Dean of the Honors College replaced the Director of the Honors Program. The Honors Program in its structure was not competitive with Honors Colleges of other major research universities. In the fall of 2009, the UAH Honors Program enrollment totaled only 4.4% of the undergraduate population, while nationally Honors College enrollments run 10 to 15% of undergraduate enrollment and are an excellent recruiting mechanism. Our Honors College enrollment has grown to 8.4% of our undergraduate population and is still growing. From the fall of 2014 to the fall of 2016, freshman Honors College enrollment increased 108% with an average ACT score of 31.4, which contributed to our record high freshman ACT score in the fall of 2016 of 27.6, the highest in the state. Our goal, which is being realized under the dean's leadership, is to have a competitive Honors College that draws the best students from Alabama and from around the country, increasing our enrollment of highly talented students and providing us with a pipeline of graduate students. These talented students are enrolled in all of our colleges, enriching our classrooms, and engaging in undergraduate research in many disciplines.

The Dean of Professional and Continuing Studies (PCS) was already in place as a Director of the Division of Professional and Continuing Studies, which was and continues to be a self-funded unit. The College of Professional and Continuing Studies was established because of the establishment of the Professional Studies baccalaureate degree program that directly addresses our priority to engage our stakeholders more fully and to increase and help diversify our enrollment with adult learners.

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The Graduate School and International Services were reorganized after the departure of the Director of International Engagement. The Dean of the Graduate School was asked to take on the leadership of international programs and merge the two operations into a more efficient and comprehensive unit. A part-time associate dean replaced the full-time director.

In the spirit of shared governance, the plans for these units were presented to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Senate with a request for feedback. Such presentations in PowerPoint or handout format will continue to be made to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Senate with a request for feedback within 60 days. All feedback from the Faculty Senate and other interested entities within or outside of the university will be given full consideration as in the past before a final decision is made.