



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 / PCU*

RE: Response to Senate Resolution SR-2016/2017-3,
Optimal Class Size

DATE: November 21, 2016

The University of Alabama in Huntsville is undergoing growth in its student body through successful recruitment and retention efforts by the faculty and staff. While this growth is vital to the future of UAH, it presents challenges that we must all work to meet. Senate Resolution SR-2016/2017-3 states that the increases in enrollment have occurred without a corresponding increase in instructional faculty, and that Deans and Chairs are being asked to increase class sizes without regard to the effect on faculty, students, or pedagogy. These assertions are not consistent with the collaborative efforts of faculty, chairs, deans, and others who are working hard to help our students succeed, and are inconsistent with objective evidence.

Department Chairs, Deans and the Provost monitor growth projections prior to each academic semester. As patterns of enrollment become clear, efforts are made to provide additional resources where needed to accommodate student demand for courses. Faculty data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment show that the ratio of student to teaching faculty has been maintained at either 23 or 24 since 2006, with the exception of one year, 2013, when the student enrollment was at one of its low points. The student to faculty ratio in that year dropped to 22:1. Faculty and student data and student to faculty ratios are shown in the table below.

In addition to the data shown in the table, it is important to note that the number of tenured and tenure-earning faculty could have numbered six more in fall of 2016; however, six searches for tenure-track faculty were unsuccessful and left six tenured and tenure-earning positions unfilled.

Term	Tenured	Tenure Earning	Non Tenured	Teaching Faculty	All Faculty	Total Students	Student:Teaching Faculty Ratio
2006	171	65	92	308	328	7091	23
2007	170	61	102	313	333	7264	23
2008	168	78	93	323	339	7431	23
2009	174	76	90	326	340	7681	24
2010	169	70	95	322	334	7614	24
2011	167	76	91	324	334	7629	24
2012	171	69	97	328	337	7636	23
2013	170	77	89	330	336	7376	22
2014	171	66	87	321	324	7348	23
2015	176	73	93	340	342	7866	23
2016	177	72	97	346	347	8468	24

Managing challenges from increased enrollment is a good problem to have. As you are aware, the university's unrestricted funding sources are primarily from state appropriations, tuition, and fees. State funding is most likely to remain steady, and tuition and fee increases are most likely to be modest, which means that increasing enrollment is the primary source of new revenue. Continued increases in enrollment through recruitment and retention are essential for the fiscal health of our university. Larger enrollment provides opportunities for the university to grow programs, provide additional physical facilities, and improve its IT infrastructure, enhance student support services, Library, online learning, and other functions needed to support our student, staff and faculty, as well as to add additional faculty in critical areas of enrollment growth. Reducing the student to teaching faculty ratio to lower than its historical normal values would have serious fiscal implications. If we use all of our increased revenue caused by student enrollment to add new faculty and reduce our student to faculty ratio lower than the historical ratio, then our university will neither progress nor improve, and we will not serve our students, staff, and faculty well.

We all realize that some classes, because of pedagogical demands, require special consideration on class size. We have taken these special needs into consideration and have honored these needs by adding additional faculty during this time of increased enrollment. Departments may suggest optimal class sizes to their deans for given classes on the basis of pedagogical needs. The deans and the provost will respond to justified needs whenever possible. However, we must be able to teach all of our students and ensure that we fulfill the expectations promised when we recruited our students.