Dear Campus Community,

Thank you all for your outstanding support during the first half of the strategic planning process. We are moving forward with a plan that will revolutionize the way Henderson focuses on students, our academic foundation, and university growth. Our next Town Hall Meeting will be Thursday, March 13 from 3-5 p.m. in the Education Building, Rooms 107 and 108. Your input is crucial, and I encourage everyone to attend.

It has become quite clear that Henderson has reached a pivotal point in its history. As the university responds to declines in state funding, calls for greater accountability, the implementation of performance funding, and increased competition, I encourage you to think about higher education and our work in innovative ways as we strive to raise Henderson’s profile in the region, state and nation.

We recently marked the 100th anniversary of the fire that destroyed our school’s infrastructure but gave rise to the birth of the Reddie Spirit. Like those students who helped rebuild our university after the great fire, we look forward while using the Henderson spirit and experience to light the way.

The focus of today’s Henderson Now will be on the more current issues that will shape Henderson’s future. Among them are recent reports from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), an update on important topics in the 2014 Arkansas legislative session, and our need to tell the Henderson story.

**ADHE reports**

In its January meeting, ADHE discussed the state of higher education in Arkansas with strong emphasis being placed on the financial conditions and enrollments of
state universities. I encourage you to review the complete reports that are available online, but I’m offering some highlights:

- Henderson State is in a solid financial position. We have managed our funds well, and despite the current financial climate, Henderson is able to continue to make improvements to the student experience that will enable us to compete with other institutions over the long term. In addition, our commitment to improving campus housing will make the university more competitive in the student recruitment process as we strive to provide the amenities that traditional-age students expect from their college experience.

- Over the past year, Henderson has experienced a five-percent decrease in its fall enrollment which will have a significant impact on our 2014-2015 budget. However, a five-year comparison reveals that we have maintained a steady enrollment. Eight of the 11 four-year institutions had positive growth over the most recent five-year horizon. This data highlights the need for us to maintain our commitment to enrollment management and focus on retention as we continue to improve the Henderson experience for all of our students.

- Online education continues to grow in the state of Arkansas with 4,860 courses being delivered via distance learning with total enrollments of 92,675. The unduplicated headcount of those enrolling was 52,488.

- Approximately 70 percent of all four-year students were under the age of 25 while 29.4 percent of students enrolled in four-year universities were classified as part-time.

Once again, I encourage you to review the ADHE reports and to feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We all have an important part to play in ensuring that Henderson remains a vital presence in the higher education landscape in Arkansas and the region.

Arkansas legislative session

During the current legislative session, the Arkansas General Assembly is addressing budgetary issues with the primary issue being whether or not to fund
the private option for Medicaid expansion. The outcome of this item will determine the state’s ability to fund many other areas of the budget. Simply put, if legislators do not approve the private option, there will be an $89 million shortfall in the state’s budget for fiscal year 2014-2015. Past history and current indicators strongly suggest that higher education will bear a significant portion of any budget cuts.

We are watching this legislative development very closely and will keep you apprised of all developments that impact Henderson. You can also learn more about the 89th General Assembly by visiting the legislative website.

The Henderson story

On Jan. 30, we honored a group of admitted freshmen at a banquet for competitive scholarship recipients. These students had an average ACT composite score of 26 with 14 percent of the students having an ACT composite of 30 or above. Over 250 guests – students as well as their parents and family members – were able to share the beginning of their unique Henderson stories with all of us.

I was incredibly proud to welcome these shining stars from Arkansas and beyond to our campus and to be able to share my Henderson story of working to create a family atmosphere for students that represents our commitment to student success.

That is my Henderson story; what’s yours? Everyone has a story of the Reddie Spirit, of the School with a Heart, and I encourage you to help our campus thrive by sharing them with our revamped marketing and communications team in the coming months.

As always, please visit the Henderson State News Blog for the latest information from our campus.

In Reddie Spirit,

Glen Jones