Dear Campus Community,

It is so good to see the sun again! As we celebrate the start of spring, I wanted to take a moment to thank you all for the outstanding job our campus did in welcoming more than 200 hundred prospective students and their guests at Reddie for Henderson Day. Despite rescheduling difficulties and poor weather on the day of the event, many students and families left with a very favorable impression of HSU! A preview day for transfer students will be held on April 24 and I encourage all of us to continue our support for Admissions and the whole Student Affairs team to make this event a positive experience for our guests.

The university is continuing to make progress on fulfilling our strategic goals. The new student residential facilities are still on target to be completed for the fall 2015 semester. These new housing options will be of great benefit to our students and they are attracting the attention of prospective students and their families. Many prospective students, and their parents, express a desire to live in modern facilities on campus, and we are responding to those requests.

Henderson holds a variety of informative and entertaining activities each semester. In order to keep the campus better informed about upcoming events, a new bi-weekly e-newsletter will be sent to everyone on campus from the Office of Marketing and Communications. This will reduce the number of emails in our inboxes and ensure that information about events is distributed throughout campus in a more timely fashion. The e-newsletter will make its debut on April 8 and will be managed through the Office of Marketing and Communications, who will draw events from the campus calendar as well as information sent to the office (hsuinfo@hsu.edu) directly.

Representatives from the Ellucian technology solutions company have completed their assessment of Henderson’s information technology infrastructure and supporting systems. The group will be presenting their findings and recommendations during a campus-wide forum April 8 from 3-5 p.m. in the Garrison Center Lecture Hall for those interested in learning more. A significant number of faculty, staff and students visited with the Ellucian representatives while they were on campus. I recognize that many of you had to rearrange your schedules to accommodate their visit, and I greatly appreciate your making the time to participate in this very important assessment of our technology infrastructure.
Both Aramark and SSC recently made presentations to the Outsourcing Committee regarding the potential outsourcing of the Physical Plant, and each took part in an open forum for the campus. This week, the Committee will meet to discuss the presentations and evaluate the proposals that were presented. A decision will be made to either leave the Physical Plant as is, or to outsource it. If the decision is to outsource, a firm will be selected, and the recommendation will be presented to the Board of Trustees for review.

As the legislative session comes to end, it appears that funding for higher education will be maintained at a relatively flat level for 2015-2016, meaning any potential funding increase will not exceed 1%. This is great news when we consider that discussions about potentially cutting higher education budgets were taking place only two weeks ago. While this may not be ideal news, I am thankful that our budget it not being cut. This will enable us to take appropriate steps in achieving the goals outlined in our strategic plan. Beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, students who score below 19 on the ACT test will no longer be eligible to receive a lottery scholarship. Additionally, the dollar awards for eligible students will be $1,000 for the freshman year, $4,000 for the sophomore and junior years, and $5,000 for the senior year. These adjustments are being made by the legislature to address the lottery’s projected financial shortfall while simultaneously encouraging students to complete college. Finally, it appears that House Bill 1077 which would permit employees to carry handguns on campus, provided they had a concealed weapons permit, will not be passed during this legislative session.

In financial matters, the University Budget Committee has met and developed a preliminary budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. During the next four weeks, we will be working to finalize the budget to ensure it supports the priorities contained in Henderson’s strategic plan. As part of this process, the Compensation Taskforce will be meeting early next month to share the results of their work with the Budget Committee. Working in collaboration with the provost and the vice president for finance, the Committee will then make a series of recommendations and discuss how to fund those recommendations. On April 23, the final recommendation of the Budget Committee will be presented to members of Henderson Board of Trustees for their initial review.

Priority Three of Henderson’s strategic plan focuses on enhancing the quality of life and the ability to recruit and retain a highly qualified and motivated faculty and staff. Improving compensation for our employees is an important part of fulfilling this strategic priority. The Taskforce will present its findings during a campus forum later next month. I encourage everyone to attend this meeting to hear the presentation of the taskforce’s work and to learn about our plan for addressing compensation-related concerns in the future.

As the semester begins to wind down, let’s be mindful to encourage our students to finish strong as their stress levels begin to rise over the next few weeks. Thank you all for your many outstanding efforts as we continue to pursue our goals as a university.

In Reddie Spirit,

Glen Jones