Dear Campus Community,

Thank you all for another solid year at HSU. Tonight, we will graduate more than 400 students who are prepared to make a positive impact in the world as a direct result of your efforts over the past few years. This is an exciting time for our students, their families, and our campus community as we celebrate this significant achievement in their lives and the promise that a college degree holds for their future. Additionally, I thank each of you for going above-and-beyond the call of duty this semester as we dealt with inclement weather and its lingering impact on the academic schedule and some of our buildings. Your patience and understanding are greatly appreciated.

Shared Governance

Our new shared governance system has facilitated the receipt of campus-wide input on four proposals this semester. Pursuant to our process, these proposals have been shared with our various constituency groups who, in turn, have sought input from others before providing feedback to our Shared Governance Committee. The committee forwarded the proposals to me yesterday and the recommendation and rationale for each item has been posted on the shared governance website. In short, I support the recommendations for outsourcing the physical plant, and amending our current healthcare retirement benefit for retirees consistent with the recommendations of the Fringe Benefits Committee and our vice president for finance, Mr. Bobby Jones. Therefore, I will submit both items for review and approval, as appropriate, at today's meeting of our Board of Trustees. The media relations and social media proposals are in the process of being revised to address concerns that arose when those proposals were initially submitted for discussion into the shared governance process. Once the revisions are complete, the proposals will be resubmitted into the shared governance process during the fall.

Decisions to outsource a component of operations are always difficult because they often involve changing the reporting structure for those who have contributed greatly to the university’s success. Our decision was not easy. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank all of our Facilities employees who have served Henderson State University so diligently throughout the years. You will continue to be members of the Reddie family, and many of you will continue to work on campus in a different capacity. We look forward to continuing this journey with you as we strive to attain the many goals we have established for Henderson.
Performance Funding

The State of Arkansas adopted a system of performance-based funding for higher education three years ago. This system states that 10 percent of each institution’s budget will be contingent upon its ability to satisfy performance indicators, the majority of which are tied to student success. Ten percent of the state-funded portion of our budget amounts to more than $2 million. While I have provided periodic updates on the progress of this system over the past two years, I believe it is imperative for everyone to remember that performance funding is real and that we will be governed by it for the foreseeable future. The reality of performance funding was seen at last week’s Higher Education Coordinating Board meeting where the latest performance funding “report card” was released and it revealed that one state university failed to achieve stated performance outcomes. That university’s budget will be reduced by approximately $185,000 for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. While HSU continues to meet the various performance measures overall, we are seeing some negative trends within our various retention-related data sets that warrant our attention. A summary of the third-year performance funding results is attached for your review. We will continue to monitor and report our yearly progress in meeting the mandated performance measures while making the necessary adjustments to ensure we meet the stated criteria.

The Board of Trustees had its annual budget workshop this morning. The workshop provides an opportunity for the Board to review the work of the Budget Committee and to discuss the campus’ recommendation for the 2015-2016 budget. The goal of this year’s budget is to begin the process of aligning our spending with the priorities of our new strategic plan. One specific priority in our strategic plan is to increase “the quality of life and the ability to recruit and retain a highly qualified and motivated faculty and staff.” As you all know, the Employee Compensation Taskforce has provided a four-year, four-step recommendation that will enable the university to meet our objective of moving total compensation for our faculty and staff to meet the average total compensation of selected peer institutions. The recommendation for the first year is to move the compensation paid by the university to 85 percent of the average compensation for our peer institutions. This would result in a total adjustment of approximately $290,000 per year. One-half of this amount ($145,000) has already been incorporated into the proposed budget while the remaining $145,000 will be awarded in September if fall enrollment increases by at least 24 full-time students to 3,688 or by a corresponding increase in student semester credit hours of 720.

Additionally, we are recommending a one percent (1%) cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all employees. While we all would like for these amounts to be greater, we must budget within the current constraints of flat funding from the state and the possibility of decreased enrollment for the current semester. As we continue to pull together to recruit new students and to retain existing students, I am confident the amounts available for salary enhancements will increase in the future. The Budget Committee and Mr. Bobby Jones have done an excellent job of setting forth a budget that is both fiscally responsible and in alignment with our stated priorities. This is only a recommendation and the Board of Trustees may choose to follow, modify, or reject the recommendation outright.

Code of Conduct
Campus safety is an issue of utmost importance. Recently there has been a pattern of inappropriate student behavior on campus that has been brought to my attention. While this issue is not pervasive, steps are being taken to address this concern. As a result, Student Affairs has completed an addendum to the Student Code of Conduct that clarifies and promotes the type of behavior we expect from students pursuing a degree at Henderson. Inappropriate behavior will result in swift and appropriate disciplinary action that may include dismissal from the university. Consistent enforcement of these policies will ensure our campus remains a place where our students, faculty, staff, and guests feel welcome and safe.

Diversity

A taskforce will be created this fall to guide our initial efforts to integrate our core value of human value and difference into the fabric of the university. This particular core value will be given tremendous care and attention given our limited history in this area and its unique impact on each of the other six core values. The primary charge of this taskforce will be to develop a comprehensive recommendation for a redesigned diversity, equity, and inclusion program that builds upon historical efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion at Henderson. The taskforce will be composed of the Provost (Chair), and 15 members from within the university who will be appointed by me in consultation with the various campus constituency groups. These individuals will represent a cross-section of the campus community and will include faculty, staff, and students.

Words cannot express my appreciation for how hard everyone has worked throughout this unusually difficult semester. Thank you for persevering through the adversity and for your continuing commitment to serving our students and our university. You are making a tremendous difference!

I hope your summer is fun, safe, and memorable!

In Reddie Spirit,

Glen Jones