Thank you all for supporting our student athletes, campus, and community during last Thursday’s football game. It was a special day for Henderson State University as we were provided a rare opportunity to showcase the heart of Henderson to a national television audience. We most definitely seized the opportunity! The grounds were spotless, the planning was flawless, and our university was very positively received into many households around the country. Our student athletes, marching band members, cheerleaders, dance team, and collective student body were the epitome of the Reddie Spirit. The refreshing feature story aired at halftime featured Kevin Rogers’ leadership in organizing a cleanup team after the Mayflower tornado and captured the heart of Henderson in a very special manner.

Now that we’ve had a few weeks to settle into the semester, I wanted to take a few moments to update you on some recent developments and exciting initiatives currently underway on the campus. We were pleased to report a 1.5% increase in the number of students enrolled in HSU this fall. First-time freshman enrollees totaled 775, an increase of almost 10% over last year. In our freshman class, 165 are participating in the Honors program. This is the largest number of freshmen participants in the program’s history. With an average ACT score of 28, they are also one of our most prepared Honors classes. Our enrollment was also bolstered by our activities in Hot Springs where 169 students are enrolled this fall. Henderson also welcomed a significant number of transfer students this fall. This was the first full year of our enrollment management plan's implementation, and we are pleased to see it yield positive results so quickly. This is truly a campus effort, and I commend the Admissions team, the faculty, staff, and current students for the various roles you continue to play in recruiting prospective students and their families to campus.
As we continue to enhance our enrollment management efforts over the next year, we will become equally focused and intentional in the area of student retention. Dr. Steve Adkison will be creating a Retention Committee to begin implementing the strategies that were developed during the strategic planning process. Our retention efforts will be absolutely critical as we strive to meet our first strategic planning priority, which is to “Grow the Enrollment, Improve Student Life, and Increase Retention to Graduation.

We will be unveiling Henderson’s new strategic plan from 3 to 4:30 p.m., Oct. 14 in the Garrison Center Lecture Hall. Please plan to attend as we celebrate the outcome of our year-long planning process. We will invite members of the broader community to join us as we begin implementation of the plan that will guide and transform our university over the next six years. Successful implementation of this plan will require a total commitment from each of us as we begin to build the future of Henderson State University. Our budget will be aligned with our strategic plan. As a result, we will revisit the plan frequently throughout each year to ensure appropriate progress is being made towards achieving the various priorities outlined within the plan.

Shared Governance Taskforce

I am pleased to announce that the shared governance taskforce announced in April has fulfilled its charge. You will recall that this group was charged with developing a common, working definition of shared governance for the university; and with developing a formal structure for pursuing opportunities and addressing challenges.

Next month, Mr. Jacob Mills, Dr. Fred Worth, and Dr. Brett Serviss will be conducting a series of town hall meetings with the campus community to communicate the shared governance framework that has been developed over the past few months. Given the importance of having a formal, transparent and effective system of shared governance on our campus, I encourage you to make every effort to attend these meetings when they are announced. Our faculty and staff leaders have devoted a tremendous amount of time and effort to this initiative and they are looking forward to sharing this framework in addition to answering your questions.

Healthcare Benefits for Retirees
During a Board of Trustees meeting last year, Mr. Bobby Jones raised the question of whether the university could afford to continue its long-standing policy of paying the full cost of healthcare benefits until the age of 65 for individuals whose age plus years of service totaled 70 when they retired from HSU. In order to appropriately and fairly answer this question, I have asked the Fringe Benefits Committee to review the impact of the current policy and to provide a recommendation regarding the sustainability of this policy in the future.

Consistently, the committed has been asked to answer the following questions: (1) Is this still an appropriate policy for the university given the current and projected costs of sustaining this policy; (2) Are there any unintended consequences of the current policy that should be addressed (i.e., individuals who have taken other jobs while HSU is still paying for their healthcare); and (3) If the committee was to recommend eliminating or modifying the policy, what is an appropriate timeframe in which to provide notice to those who may be planning to take advantage of this benefit in the future. Any recommendation to alter or to eliminate the current policy will be submitted into the shared governance process for full campus input and discussion before any decision is made.

Employee Compensation Taskforce

Last month, I appointed and charged a taskforce for the purpose of conducting research that will be necessary to support the strategic planning desired outcome that "Total compensation for faculty and staff meets the average total compensation reported for similar positions at selected peer institutions..." The task force has been charged with the following: (1) Determine Henderson’s position relative to select competitive and comparable peers in the area of total employee compensation; (2) Determine the amount of resources, if any, that will be needed to meet this strategic planning objective; and (3) Given the data, recommend a realistic and fiscally responsible time horizon for meeting this objective.

The taskforce is comprised of the following individuals:

Dr. Steve Adkison - Provost
Dr. Nathan Campbell - Assoc. Dean of Business/Associate Professor of Management
Dr. David Evans - Professor of Music/Co-Chair of
Strategic Planning Quality of Life Subcommittee
Mr. Bobby Jones - Vice President for Finance
Dr. Michael Lloyd - Professor of Mathematics
Mr. Jacob Mills - President of Staff Senate
Ms. Ginger Otwell - Director of Institutional Research
Ms. Kathryn Taylor - Director of Human Resources
Dr. Fred Worth - President of Faculty Senate

Bobby Jones is serving as chair of the taskforce and it is my desire to have the group complete its work on or before Jan. 1, 2015. Once the taskforce completes its charge, I will then ask the VP for Finance and Administration, working in conjunction with the Provost and the University Budget Committee, to develop a strategy for moving the university forward in this area.

During my first two years at HSU, I have spent a significant amount of time listening to the concerns of our campus community. During many of these discussions/visits, the conversation would often include expressions of concerns regarding “low morale” on campus. While compensation would often emerge as a driving factor, there were a number of non-compensation related issues that emerged as well. Working in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Quality of Life Subcommittee, I wanted to take the pulse of the campus in order to pinpoint the source of the concerns and to develop a comprehensive approach to address systemic issues of campus morale.

As a result, the campus participated in the Chronicle of Higher Education’s *Best Colleges to Work for* survey last spring. The group that administers this survey on behalf of the Chronicle, ModernThink, will be on campus later this semester to share and review the results with the entire campus community through a series of presentations. We will provide more information to the campus community once the dates are established for their visit. Subsequently, the Fringe Benefits Committee and my Executive Council will be tasked with identifying at least one area of focus to address each year for the next several years. We will participate in the Chronicle’s survey every two or three years to measure our collective progress in this area.

Thank you for all for your individual and collective efforts to advance Henderson State University each day. We continue to receive many very positive comments about our campus, faculty, staff, students and our programs. I greatly appreciate the extraordinary effort you are extending on behalf of the university. This is an exciting time to be at Henderson and I am looking forward to the many
wonderful things we will accomplish as a campus community this year and beyond.

In Reddie Spirit,

Glen Jones