Dear Campus Community,

Thank you all for your patience and understanding as we worked through the various challenges presented by last week’s inclement weather. From leaking ceilings to cold offices, Phil Collins, Bobby Jones, Chief Campbell, Residence Life, and the UPD team worked tirelessly to help restore campus and care for our students following the inclement weather we had earlier this month. I greatly appreciate their timely response and caring spirit toward our students and our community.

Despite the weather-related interruptions, Henderson is moving forward. The Fringe Benefits Committee has been meeting to discuss possible changes to healthcare benefits for Henderson employees. The committee has developed a recommendation that will be forwarded to the campus for input via our new shared governance process, which has begun reviewing submitted proposals. If you wish to submit a proposal or track one that has been submitted, log into MyHenderson and choose the "Shared Governance" tab. The tab contains documents that provide an overview of the process along with the form to be used for proposals.

This time of year, we are involved in preparing the campus budget for the next fiscal year. Our budget committee is currently meeting with stakeholders throughout the campus to construct a budget that is transparent, responsible, and connected to our university’s strategic plan. An abundance of information is necessary to prepare and manage Henderson State University’s operating budget each year. In order to be successful, we must be transparent.

Everyone is welcome to attend budget hearings, which are listed on the university calendar (http://getreddie.hsu.edu/calendar/). To maximize our resources, our budgetary planning model brings together academic and administrative planning and budgeting. More important, this model aligns with the overall goals and objectives of our strategic plan (http://www.hsu.edu/OurCampus/Strategic-plan/executive-summary.html). As our budget continues to be refined, please take an opportunity to learn about the process and become an active participant by giving feedback to your supervisor or your faculty or staff senate representative.

Our Board of Trustees recently approved our emergency management plan, one of the tools that help our university provide a timely and appropriate response to emergencies on campus. This plan, which includes a framework for our university’s actions following a number of different kinds of emergencies, was formed in accordance with state and federal laws, executive orders and other authorities for emergency management, including the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System.

The Emergency Management Plan is designed to help university employees respond appropriately when emergency conditions exist. Although these situations are unpredictable and vary widely in scope, this plan provides guidance for an immediate response by university employees, thereby minimizing the danger to the university community. The Chief of the HSU Police is charged with coordinating the university’s mitigation and preparedness efforts. In the event of an emergency, the President will direct the university’s response.

Our plan includes a series of communication vehicles and tools that allow the university to respond quickly in the event of an emergency. We have long had the Rave Alert system in place to notify students, faculty and staff when an emergency occurs. Last year, we installed an outdoor alarm system, and most buildings now have first-aid kits that provide appropriate
emergency instructions and supplies to help employees better respond in the event of injury. Another tool in our emergency response kit – one that makes our employees better equipped to deal with emergencies – is the Emergency Guidebook that has been delivered to employees. If you have not received a copy of the Guidebook, please contact Chief Johnny Campbell to secure one. In addition to the Guidebook, our emergency procedures are listed on the university’s website (http://www.hsu.edu/CampusSafety/Emergency-Procedures/Index.html). I urge you to familiarize yourself with these tools before an emergency arises. In the coming weeks, Chief Johnny Campbell and his team will be conducting a series of training sessions throughout the campus to ensure we all understand what our response should be under various emergency scenarios.

As Bobby Jones announced via e-mail last month, Henderson is considering the possibility of outsourcing the Physical Plant and has invited to campus two of the five firms that responded to the Request for Proposals. Each firm will meet with the committee that was formed to examine the possible effects of outsourcing and will also make a presentation to the rest of campus in an open forum. Subsequently, the committee will provide a recommendation and supporting rationale, either to outsource or to continue maintaining the operation internally. I encourage you to attend these forums when they are rescheduled and submit comments or questions at the close to be reviewed by the committee.

Henderson is participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) this year. The survey collects information about first-year and senior students’ participation in activities and programs. The results provide information about how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Please encourage the students you come in contact with to participate in this survey, which may help us improve the undergraduate experience and increase student engagement.

Yesterday, House Bill 1077 passed the full House by a vote of 66-25. The bill will now be referred to the Senate. This bill would allow faculty and staff members who have a concealed weapons permit to possess a concealed handgun while on campus. The HSU Board of Trustees voted in May to prohibit the possession of concealed handguns on our campus. That position has not changed. The safety and welfare of our faculty, staff, and students remains tantamount and we cannot support any measure that would jeopardize the safety of our campus community.

One of Henderson’s core values is that we embrace our differences and value an inclusive community. We want to ensure that everyone’s perspective is heard. It is to that end that vice presidents have been conducting listening sessions with their respective areas over the past several weeks. In the course of these visits, it has become quite evident that stronger bilateral communication is needed throughout the university. In order to strengthen campus communications and to ensure key voices are heard in a timely manner, I have recently appointed the presidents of the Faculty and Staff Senates to be standing members of the President’s Cabinet. These individuals will join other cabinet members in providing advice directly to the president on policy matters impacting our campus community. I am looking forward to working with Ms. Julie Cissell and Dr. Brett Serviss in this capacity.

As we prepare for more severe winter weather this week, please be mindful to check on current and former colleagues to determine if there are needs we can help meet as a community. Thank you all for your continued commitment to HSU and the wonderful students we are honored to serve.

In Reddie Spirit,

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