



July 31, 2023

Dear Members of the Campus Community,

After much personal reflection about all of the progress we have accomplished, I have decided to step aside as we complete Year Zero and create space for the next leader of Henderson to continue the work of creating the future we have begun together. I am working directly with Dr. Chuck Welch on a transition plan, and you can expect to hear additional information in the coming days. My last official day as chancellor of the university will be September 15.

Henderson has weathered the storm with a depth of change at a speed that is unparalleled in higher education. At a time when the value of college is being questioned by students and their families across higher education, Henderson has faced our challenges head on by restructuring the university to provide a more sustainable model focused on student success. During the past two years, we have confronted our financial and structural challenges, utilized transparent data to inform decision-making, and focused on access and affordability for students while reallocating resources to offer degrees that best align to community and future workforce needs.

This past fiscal year especially has seen significant improvements for the university's financial position and operations. We restructured the academic program into four learning communities, integrated support and shared services in partnership with the Arkansas State University System, and realigned the mission and resources of the university to focus on student success and learning outcomes. These repositioning efforts have been recently affirmed by the Higher Learning Commission and the State of Arkansas as critical to strengthening the overall viability of Henderson and serve as a valuable example for our peers in higher education.

The progress we made together restored the financial integrity of the university and has provided a sustainable platform for the future of Henderson. These gains have included:

- One of the largest cost containment initiatives in the shortest amount of time for a public comprehensive four-year university
- Improved net position from \$21,013,662 in FY21 to \$31,946,526 in FY22
- Improved from 7 days of cash on hand in 2019 to 50 days of cash on hand in 2022—all while aligning staffing to our enrollment, reducing payables by over \$5 million dollars or 80 percent, and demonstrating the fiscal integrity required by state and accrediting standards
- Increased the number of students who both completed their FAFSA and gained access to the federal financial aid they were eligible to receive
- Created the #StudentsFirst Initiative with the design of the Reddie Student Success Center and Reddie Outreach Center along with the tools and leadership required to build enrollment, increase completion rates, and enhance the overall value of a Henderson degree

Although the challenge of long-term debt still exists, the mission of Henderson State University as a member of the Arkansas State University System remains strong. The Reddie Spirit is alive within the university and throughout the extended community of alumni and friends. The School with a Heart provides a caring campus community where student belonging and engagement are valued. These qualities will propel Henderson into a bright future.

There are many individuals who have provided critical leadership to the Henderson turnaround. Resilience defines the students, faculty, and staff who weathered the scope and speed of change. The Strategic Leadership Team provided the courage and effort required to make hard decisions with the support of data provided by partners like Huron Consulting Group. Our strategic

alliance with the Arkansas State University System included direct support in the areas of governmental relations, institutional research, communications, legal services, financial and audit support, human resources, and benefits. These resources helped design the infrastructure required to implement financial exigency, produce significant cost savings, redesign the overall mission and academic program, and provide a sustainable platform for the future of Henderson.

I have great confidence in you and in the Arkansas State University System to take Henderson to the next level of operational integrity, and most important, to continue opening the doors of opportunity and access for all students. Thank you for welcoming us into the Henderson community and the opportunity to experience the Reddie Spirit.

I look forward to seeing that Reddie Spirit impact the lives of Henderson students in the months and years ahead. As always, if there are ways that I can be of support to you as a community of educators, please know that I will look forward to remaining connected.

Thank you for your friendship and the efforts you have made to better serve our students.

Joining you in service,



Chuck Ambrose