Report of the Provost's Recruitment and Retention Task Force

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Table of Contents:

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Background

The Recruitment and Retention Task force was created by Provost Nancy Barrett in September 1996 and charged to "generate specific ideas for improving student recruitment and retention" at the University. The Task Force was charged specifically *not* to be "simply another study committee" on the issues at hand, and was composed of individuals with sufficient knowledge and experience with the issues to be able to "focus directly on the identification of solutions, short-term and long-term, and the associated specific actions" required to implement those solutions.

Consistent with its charge, the Task Force met frequently and discussed a wide range of problems and opportunities in student recruitment and retention at the University of Alabama, with the discussions informed primarily by the extensive experience of the Task Force members accumulated at this institution and some 20 colleges and universities across the United States, two major University of Alabama study committee and external consultant reports on the subject completed 12 years ago, and a limited amount of survey, demographic, and market research information. In its discussion of institutional circumstances and possible solutions, the Task Force noted that a number of the problems and issues had been identified and addressed in the prior reports, but that many of the recommendations made in those reports had not been implemented, implemented ineffectively or only in part, or implemented and subsequently abandoned.

The Task Force identified an extended list of prospective solutions and actions to enhance student recruitment and retention ranging from major and fundamental changes in institutional operational support, policies and practices to minor adjustments in the physical environment, and many points in between. Following further review, the Task Force decided to emphasize those areas that seemed most important and most likely to result in early improvements in recruitment and retention, and agreed that the list of recommendations detailed in this report represent the most important and productive initiatives the University can undertake in support of student recruitment and retention at this time. The Task Force specifically recommends that *all* of the recommendations for action be pursued.

- Immediately upgrade the Student Information System (SIS)
- Improve the Management and Coordination of Academic Scholarships
- Strategically and Substantially Increase Funding for Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Improve Key Academic Services for Students
- Implement New Academic and Student Support Services
- Revise Selected Academic Policies
- Establish a University Environment Conducive to Recruitment and Retention
- Follow-through on Implementation/Operation of Recent Recruitment Initiatives

While it may simply state the obvious, it has been clear throughout the discussions of the Task Force that the true value of recommendations to improve student recruitment and retention is in their *implementation* rather than their formulation and publication.

Recommendations for Action

1. Immediately upgrade the Student Information System (SIS) and significantly enhance related administrative computing support.

The University's current Student Information System (Information Associates' SIS release 88.1) is badly outdated, functionally limited, and, with the exception of the billings and receivables function, locally modified to the point of developmental paralysis. Its day-to-day operations are further complicated by limited computing and related communications capacity and seriously inadequate technical and systems/programming support, including both number and experience/system familiarity of technical support staff. To a certain extent, the limitations of the current SIS in support of recruitment functions reflect the historical failure of the Admissions Office to make use of the existing functionality of SIS and demand corresponding systems development support from the University. However, the failure of the Admissions Office to develop available functionality is greatly overshadowed by the inherent functional limitations of the 10-year-old system design and the urgent contemporary problem of accommodating the year 2000 in active operations. Adequate and contemporary administrative computing support is a fundamental precondition of effective recruitment and retention efforts, and this precondition simply has not been met and sustained by the University.

Expedited implementation of an upgraded Student Information System (i.e., SIS-Plus), including the technical support staff necessary provide full implementation and operational support is imperative and truly urgent. In the interim, special programming support should be provided to implement the on-line prospect and applicant contact tracking capabilities available in the current SIS, and to complete programming for batch uploading of prospect data from field collections (e.g., Admission Counselor Excel files).

2. Improve the Management and Coordination of Academic Scholarships.

The University should implement an organized, institution-wide management and coordination function for all academic scholarships to promote optimal, strategic, and efficient use of available academic scholarship funds at

the institution, college, and department levels. By comparison to other public universities, the University of Alabama benefits from a comparatively large academic scholarship base, but in operation, the student recruitment and retention benefits of the funds are reduced due to a serious lack of coordination and information, and a fund-raising strategy that has emphasized college-based scholarships programs thus limiting the availability of *institution-wide* scholarship support. The University's academic scholarships must be more effectively managed and coordinated. In addition to an organizational focus, this effort will require acquisition or creation of a comprehensive database including a full inventory of all academic scholarships awarded by or available to any unit of the University, including both non-need and need-based academic scholarships. This database must have on-line search capabilities. This scholarship management and coordination initiative also should be designed and charged to accomplish the following objectives and functions:

- Development and implementation of a consolidated academic scholarship application and coordinated application processing function.
- Coordination of the academic scholarship award process for the entire campus *without* compromising the established award decision-making authority and participation.
- Development and implementation of institution-wide policies on the administration of academic scholarships.
- Acquisition or creation and operation of a comprehensive and searchable scholarship inventory and database.
- Direct administration of general institutional scholarships that are not need-based.

3. Substantially and Strategically Increase Funding for Scholarships and Financial Aid.

All available evidence indicates that academic scholarships play a pivotal role in the University's effectiveness in recruiting, enrolling, and retaining the number and caliber of students the University seeks and is charged to serve. At this time, the University must increase the total amount and range of scholarship and institutional financial assistance funding (as opposed to federal financial aid programs), with a particular and strong emphasis on institution-wide funding and strategic academic scholarship initiatives. Increased academic scholarship funds are needed to improve the University's competitive position for the students the University seeks to recruit across a fairly large range of the traditional academic qualifications of admissions test score (ACT/SAT) and high school grades. Additional general scholarship and grant funds are urgently needed to reduce the extremely large role of loans in financial aid packages to students applying for need-based aid, and additional work-related financial aid is needed for the same purpose and also to address needs and financial aid preferences of prospective transfer students in particular. Loans now constitute an overwhelming majority of need-based financial aid packages, and there is reason to believe that heavy concentrations of loans can be counterproductive in student recruitment. Current University-wide scholarship programs such as Presidential Scholarships and the National Alumni Association's Crimson, Alumni Honors, and Leadership Scholarships are effective and well-known, and there is no reason to believe that changing the structure and focus of these

scholarships, and the associated redirection of current funds, would result in any real improvement in new student recruitment (and in fact such a change might prove disruptive and counterproductive to recruitment). Additional scholarship and institutional financial aid funds in the amount of $3 million annually would be appropriate to the need, and should be specifically sought as a priority in the final phase of the current Capital Campaign. The new academic scholarship funds and general financial aid must be actively and promptly sought, and should be used for the following specific new initiatives and purposes:

- Seek to maximize institution-wide scholarships and minimize donor restrictions in the solicitation and acceptance of all new donations.
- Design and implement on-campus scholarship competition focused specifically on "academic achievers" -- prospective students with solid academic records and ACT scores in the 25 to 29 range. Appropriate University personnel should review existing scholarship competitions at other institutions such as Western Michigan University and Birmingham Southern College, and develop a specific plan for an on-campus scholarship competition in support of Fall 1998 recruitment.
- Increase work-based financial aid and on-campus employment opportunities as key components of standard financial aid packages.
- Increase direct grant support available in need-based financial aid packages.
- Significantly expand funding for "earned" scholarships awarded to continuing students on the basis of strong academic performance while enrolled at UA.
- Significantly expand the number of two-year Presidential Scholarships for transfer students.
- In constructing the scholarship management database, actively seek opportunities to increase available general applicability scholarship funds by reviewing and carefully evaluating donor restrictions to maximize award flexibility of all funds. "New" small scholarship funds created in this fashion could be used as seed scholarships (or even "bait") to be awarded to winners of competitions conducted in selected on-campus high school programs (e.g., state-wide German Club convention, etc.)

4. Improve Key Academic Services for Students.

Academically able current and prospective students want, need, and deserve high quality academic support services, including appropriate access to such relevant academic program information as meaningful information for degree planning purposes, and their own academic record. Students should be able to directly update selected "directory information" elements such as address and telephone number. A major and long-standing impediment in the recruitment and retention of transfer students is the complexity, restrictiveness, and unpredictability of institution-wide acceptance and degree applicability of transfer credit. Current and prospective transfer students simply must be accorded maximum applicable credit for coursework successfully completed at other two-year and four-year institutions through equitable, predictable, and efficient evaluation procedures. Academic advising also is a perpetual concern to students, parents, and advisers that directly affects recruitment and retention. The importance of this function is borne out by the creation of a special Provost's Task Force on

Academic Advising, and this task force encourages serious consideration and accompanying action on the report of that task force. Moreover, the University must significantly increase its efforts to provide academic support services *designed and functioning* to promote, facilitate, and support the academic success of enrolled and prospective students. The following new services represent instrumental and basic institutional support for student academic success, and should be provided at the earliest possible time:

- **Create a comprehensive transfer course equivalency function** including establishment and maintenance of institution-wide course equivalencies and associated policies, and an on-line transfer equivalency clearinghouse function. Under this approach, incoming transfer work would be equated to existing UA courses on an institution-wide and course-by-course basis with primary equivalencies determined by the corresponding UA department (e.g., UA equivalencies for incoming transfer work in Mathematics would be determined by the Mathematics Department, Psychology courses by the Psychology Department, etc.; as a practical matter, historical equivalencies established through the individual colleges should be adopted as a foundation for the equivalency function provided that the equivalencies must operate on an institution-wide basis). Once the appropriate UA equivalency has been determined, transfers of the specific course from the specific institution would be automatically assigned the UA equivalency. For all internal purposes, specifically including degree requirements, the equivalency would be treated identically to the native UA course. Equivalencies could range from specific course to general course level (e.g., 300-level Biology), to general elective, to no equivalency credit, and could operate on a one-for-one, one-for-many, or many-for-one basis structurally. The Clearinghouse function would both coordinate the administration of initial determinations and provide mechanism for assigning appropriate UA equivalencies for subject areas not directly reflected in the UA academic departments by appropriate review committees. UA equivalencies for incoming transfer work are essential to the creation of a complete electronic transcript to support a comprehensive on-line degree audit system (such a system can only "read" the electronic record and defined UA courses.)
- **Implement and actively maintain a comprehensive institution-wide degree audit system.** Graduation requirements for virtually any approved undergraduate degree should be well-defined and readily understood in operational terms by advisers, students, and parents. Every student and his or her academic adviser should have appropriate access to a timely analysis of the student's status with respect to the specific degree he or she is pursuing or wishes to pursue, including at a minimum, requirements met, requirements in progress, and outstanding requirements with specific options for meeting those outstanding requirements. If the degree audit capabilities of SIS are inadequate or cannot be obtained in a timely manner, the University should purchase and promptly implement proven degree audit software (e.g., the DARS product developed by Miami University of Ohio). The transfer course equivalency and degree audit project are closely interrelated and should be pursued concurrently.
- **Enhance student access to and management of personal academic and educational information.** All students should have convenient access to key information in the academic records, and also should have multiple convenient means to update relevant directory information specifically including addresses, phone numbers, and related directory and selected non-directory (e.g., next-of-kin/emergency contact) information not otherwise restricted by University or external policies.

[Back to top.](#)

5. Implement New Academic and Student Support Services.

While increased scholarship support has been a prominent and recurring element in discussions and reviews of the University's recruitment and retention efforts and *environment*, there are other specific factors for which realistic programs can be developed and remedial or enhancement actions taken. It is important for the University to recognize the different interests and backgrounds of prospective students, their understanding of the University, and their expectations of it. Moreover, although perceptions may differ from reality, perceptions nonetheless are critically important in the recruitment process, and it is particularly important for the University to project that it is in fact attending to perceived issues and concerns, and that it also recognizes and welcomes the full range of its primary clientele. In this regard, it is important for the reality of attending the University to be consistent with expectations developed in the recruitment process. Additionally, the University must understand that the concerns and perceptions of parents and the general public directly affect recruitment and retention. The following initiatives represent opportunities for *immediate* responses to some of these concerns and interests.

- **Define an appropriate role for and include Campus Ministries.** In spite of continuing student interest and involvement, Campus Ministries currently reside and operate a status of relative uncertainty that may represent an "arms-length" relationship exceeding the appropriate degree of separation in a public university community. The fact of the matter is that religious involvement of varying forms and to varying extents has been and is an important part of many of the lives of our prospective students and their families, and the opportunity for a continuation of that involvement is not only a reasonable expectation but also in many cases directly contributes to the University's goal of promoting student success. While it clearly cannot be permitted to intrude or in any way be imposed or specifically endorsed, organized opportunities for religious involvement as represented by the Campus Ministry Association should be recognized as a relevant part of the University community and student life environment. In terms of new student recruitment, the University should work with the Campus Ministry Association to develop an appropriate information brochure for distribution to admitted students by the Campus Ministry Association in the same manner that information on other student-oriented services is provided, and by Admissions Staff *in response to specific requests* by prospective students.
- **Implement a "Pledges' Bill of Rights" to curtail hazing** including disclosure of fraternity and sorority academic and disciplinary status. The University's clear anti-hazing policy should be converted to a more operationally effective "Bill of Rights" for fraternity and sorority pledges specifying exactly the kinds of behavior and activities that are either permitted or prohibited in a pledgeship relationship. The "Pledge's Bill of Rights" should include a University phone number for reporting complaints, and this phone number should be equipped with 24-hour voice mail and monitored by University staff on a daily basis. Explicit notification of permissible and prohibited behavior would clearly reflect the University's active posture on the issue of hazing, and should help deter prohibited behavior. Additionally, the academic and disciplinary status/recent history of each fraternity and sorority should be published in an annual disclosure statement and distributed to all students prior to their participation in fraternity or sorority rush activities (whether formal or informal). The "Pledge's Bill of Rights," hazing notification information, and annual academic and disciplinary status disclosure statement should be distributed to current or prospective students and their parents upon request, and directly to all students and parents attending New Student Orientation programs.

- **Implement early promotion and application/deposit for on-campus housing.** Applications for on-campus housing should be available in late August of each year at the time on-the-road recruitment for the following fall semester begins, and applications for housing should be solicited and processed (to include deposit for confirmation and selection priority purposes) beginning one year prior to the projected term of enrollment (e.g., acceptance and processing of applications in August 1996 for Fall 1997 enrollment.) In addition to improving service to meet customer requests, the early opportunity to confirm housing should help strengthen the prospective student's identification with the University and commitment to enrollment.
- **Provide progressive academic performance feedback in 100 and 200 level courses.** Many students entering the University as freshmen, while academically able, are not adequately prepared for the pace of instruction, volume of work, and performance expectations at UA. Consequently these students may be either slow to recognize, slow to respond to, and/or disinclined to seek on a timely basis evaluative information on their classroom performance. Students in 100 and 200 level courses should receive meaningful feedback on their academic performance early in the course and on a relatively frequent periodic basis throughout the course. Ideally this feedback would provide an assessment not only of performance and progress, but also guidance for improvement. Where possible, an examination or other means of performance evaluation representing a significant portion of the final grade (perhaps 20 percent) should be conducted with feedback to the student within the first four weeks of a course offered in the Fall or Spring semester.
- **Provide adequate course availability during registration periods.** Although final course enrollment selection patterns have been relatively stable for an extended period and demand for some key courses is well-known, the range and quantity of initial courses offered at the beginning of a registration period often is smaller and more restricted than either the final configuration of the most recent like academic term (e.g., Fall 1995 for Fall 1996) or what ultimately is the final configuration of the term in active registration (and/or a reasonable expectation of student demand for that term) result in unnecessary limitations in course availability and complications and inconvenience for students in the registration process. Colleges should provide the closest possible approximation of the final volume and scope of course offerings for any term at the **beginning** of the registration period for that term.
- **Provide substantial course availability during evening hours.** Many students need or desire to schedule courses during evening hours to accommodate work, family, or other relevant responsibilities. As a general rule, a course offered with four or more sections should include at least one section scheduled during evening hours.
- **Design an institution-wide freshman orientation course** to be taken on a voluntary basis. Current college-based orientation courses in Commerce and Business Administration, Engineering, Human Environmental Sciences, and New College appear to have been beneficial to entering freshmen. Such courses offered in an institution-wide design have been highly successful in institutions similar to the University of Alabama, and provide a measure of inclusion, integration, and consistency that separate college-based courses cannot. The noted strengths of existing college-based freshman orientation courses should be preserved and incorporated in the institution-wide design. The course should carry one to two hours of credit and be available to entering freshmen during the fall semester only. An initial version of the new course, UA 101 for want of a better title, should be offered on a pilot basis in Fall 1997.

Back to top.

6. Revise Key Academic Policies.

Many of the University policies directly affecting the academic life and affairs of undergraduate students, from recruitment through enrollment to degree completion, seem to be focused more on regulating and limiting students than encouraging, promoting, and facilitating their academic success. Moreover, many of the policies, whether by design or default, appear to be unnecessarily harsh and restrictive with what even a detached observer might recognize as a punitive tone. Although some of the troublesome policies are of recent vintage, many have their origins in the University of Alabama that existed 25 to 40 years ago, the student, academic, social, and recruitment environment of that time, and the associated assumptions and realities of student academic preparation and student role in the University community in particular. Due in large part to implementation of a selective admissions policy and associated strengthening of academic requirements for admission (with significant enhancements fully implemented as recently as one year ago), students attending the University of Alabama today are better prepared academically than they have ever been. The academically able students the University now seeks and attracts need, expect, and deserve academic policies that promote their academic success while assuring the essential integrity of the enterprise. To more effectively serve our current and future student population, the University must revise key academic policies, specifically including the following:

- **Eliminate the plus/minus grading system.** The opinion of current and prospective students toward the current plus/minus grading system appears to be moderately to strongly negative with a surprising amount of concern from prospective students. The current policy is at the very least flawed in design with an unintended bias toward negative effects on student grade averages in that the absence of a quality point benefit for an "A+" provides students no opportunity to offset the quality point deficit of an "A-" through classroom performance. Additionally, the quality point differential for grades of "C-" increases the difficulty of achieving minimum graduation requirements, and the instrumental value of plus and minus distinctions for "D" grades, which represent unsatisfactory performance, seems limited at best. *However, in that plus/minus distinctions may be valuable tools for making distinctions among satisfactory grades, an alternative recommendation for retaining the plus/minus grading system while correcting the current structural inequity of the "A+/A-" is to eliminate the quality point differential for all "A" grades, assigning "A+, A, and A-" identical quality point values of 4.0.* (In order to protect the interests of our students in the external evaluation of their academic records, the University as a practical matter must follow the established national standards for undergraduates of not awarding "bonus" quality points for an "A+.")
- **Revise the core curriculum to restore and enhance its coherence and proper role.** Once a positive and distinguishing factor in student recruitment and retention, the University's Core Curriculum in current application has lost its essential focus, thrust, and role through the proliferation of recognized Core courses and consequent dilution and disintegration. Rather than a common pathway and a uniting component of a UA undergraduate degree, it has become either an obstacle course to be completed for its own sake or a disciplinary academic surcharge in individual degree programs. As a complex and central academic policy, the Core Curriculum requires careful and informed review prior to revision. However, at a minimum, such revisions should include a clear statement of the purpose, role, and expectations of the Core Curriculum in undergraduate degrees at UA, and a significant reduction of and continuing limitation on the number of courses recognized as meeting Core Curriculum requirements. For instance, a total of no more than 100 courses at any one time should be sufficient to cover all requirements of a coherent and meaningful Core Curriculum.

- **Revise academic probation and suspension policies and procedures.** A recent review of academic probation and suspension policies concluded that the current policies and practices do not effectively promote the success of students and actually may be so undemanding and delayed in effect that they are counterproductive. The University should promptly revise its academic probation and suspension policies and procedures as detailed in the May 14, 1996, recommendation of the Committee on Admission and Retention, attached, specifically including the development of appropriate revisions in the policy for second suspensions. A policy that accommodates multiple suspensions beyond the initial suspension seems inconsistent with reasonable academic expectations for the University of Alabama.
- **Develop a "fresh start" policy for older returning students.** The current "Academic Second Opportunity" policy provides a very limited version of a "fresh start" for some older returning students but involves an exceptionally long "waiting period" of eight (8) calendar years which renders the policy virtually useless and unrealistic in a practical sense -- a student leaving the University at age 19 would be eligible to invoke an Academic Secondary Opportunity at age 27, or 142% of the student's age at the time of departure! A more realistic and productive requirement would be an absence of three (3) years with significant limits on the amount of college credit that the student could earn and transfer during the three-year period. Appropriate institution-wide standards in addition to relevant college-specific standards for treatment of the prior UA and transfer work of students applying for a "fresh start" should be established. The overriding objective of this policy should be to facilitate the return and academic success of returning students who show appropriate ability and intent to complete a degree program.
- **Revise key policies governing student academic affairs** to reduce punitive features and enhance features promoting student academic success and persistence, as follows:
  - *Incomplete ("I") Grades:* Incomplete ("I") grades should be given by the instructor only upon written request of the student and only in cases in which a substantial portion of the course requirements have been met prior to the conclusion of the term in which the course was taken and there is reason to believe that the student can complete the course with a passing grade within the time period allowed. An "I" grade must be removed within 12 months of the end of the term in which it was awarded but prior to the student's graduation. At the conclusion of the 12-month period, an "I" grade will be converted to an "F" by the University Registrar and so recorded on the student's official academic record. From the time it is awarded and until it is removed or converted to a failing grade, the "I" grade will be excluded from the calculation of the student's grade point average and academic standing.
  - *Forgiveness:* The current Forgiveness policy is at best an erratic means for redressing some aspects of prior poor academic performance for some students but not others in identical circumstances, and at worst a free and capricious mechanism for inflating grade averages. In operation, the policy causes confusion and results in demonstrably inequitable treatment of students both across and within individual colleges. However, one reasonable objective of the current Forgiveness policy, to allow students to achieve limited recovery in grade average and academic status from poor classroom performance, can be achieved in an equitable, predictable, and educationally responsible manner through an institutional course repeat policy. Such a policy would allow a student to literally repeat a limited number of courses (three or four) with only the grade from second enrollment counting in the grade average. Since such a policy would require actual repetition of the course to obtain relief from the prior grade, there would be no need to restrict the array of courses to which the repeat option could be applied.
  - *Course and University Withdrawal:* The practice of assigning grades of "WP" and "WF" to students withdrawing from individual courses or the University during the course of an academic

term and the associated practices regarding the calculation of grade point averages and academic standing (i.e., calculating "WF" as a failing final grade) should be immediately discontinued and replaced with an updated withdrawal policy including specific periods for withdrawal with no record, withdrawal with a grade of "W," and withdrawal (with a grade of "W") with the dean's permission only.

- *Medical Withdrawal:* The medical withdrawal policy should be reserved exclusively for bona fide medical problems, administered as defined exclusively by the professional medical staff of the University, and in the context of necessary changes in other academic policies and implementation of new academic policies as recommended, should not be applied retroactively or repeatedly except in well-documented, and demonstrably relevant cases.
- *Probation and suspension for transfer students:* In recognition of their experience and different circumstances, a separate policy should be developed for *initial* academic probation and suspensions of transfer students. Policies regarding *second or subsequent* probation and suspensions should be the same for all students.

7. Establish a University Environment Conducive to Recruitment and Retention.

This recommendation is as difficult to define and implement as it is obvious in its need and relevance. The University of Alabama must be both presented as interested in and supportive of its current and prospective students, and interested and supportive of current and prospective students in reality. Students and their parents must know what the University is, what it expects of them, and what they may and should expect of it. Central to the public representation of "what the University is" is its role and mission as a public university, and that the education of qualified students is an essential and primary mission; that in fact teaching is the first among our tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service, and thus our concern for and interest in our students is paramount. The recruitment and retention environment operates both outside and within the University, and both areas require active attention.

- **Significantly enhance the public image and appreciation of the role and stature of the University.** The University of Alabama is and must be a major university in the full sense of the term, the leading university in the state, and an absolutely critical element in the economic, human resource, and social development and future of this state and region. Moreover, the absence of a top quality public university would further retard the development of the state both directly and indirectly. The University must actively educate the public to and promote the University's necessary role, and make clear its expectations for itself and its students, and the expectations that the public and prospective students should have for the University.
- **Create an attitude of active acceptance and support for admitted students.** As a flagship state university, the University of Alabama has specific responsibilities to the students it serves. The admission policy of the University has been designed to reflect both the University's mission and the relevant

academic environment and expectations of the University in the context of its mission. In fact it is the most demanding undergraduate admission policy in the state, and new freshmen entering the University of Alabama in Fall 1996 were the most academically well-qualified entering class in the history of the institution. Students who are admitted to the University under these standards are fully eligible and entitled to be here. Upon admission, the full resources of the institution, specifically the efforts of the faculty and staff, should be turned to the task of encouraging, promoting, and facilitating admitted students' academic success. While some admitted students, including some of the most talented, will be unsuccessful, their lack of success should not be a result of the lack of interest, support, or effort by the University *within* the context of responsible academic standards.

- **Promote recognition of the link between enrollment and faculty and staff employment.** Students are the primary reason the University exists, and serving students well is a prerequisite to other functions of the University. The pivotal and instrumental role of student enrollment in the success and operation of the University should be made explicit to faculty and staff and periodically reiterated in a positive manner.

8. Follow-through on Implementation/Operation of Recent Recruitment Initiatives.

Beginning in the 1995-96 academic year, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions developed and began implementation of a number of initiatives designed to enhance existing new student recruitment efforts. These initiatives are relevant, appropriately strategic, and from early evidence (e.g., Fall 1997 freshman applications and admissions, etc.) appear to be having a positive effect on recruitment directly and the recruitment environment in general. The Undergraduate Admissions Office should be encouraged to continue these initiatives with appropriate periodic review and strategic enhancement.

- **Enhance the University's National Merit/Achievement scholarship package.** National Merit and National Achievement Finalists who list the University of Alabama as their college of choice with the National Merit Corporation will receive an IBM ThinkPad 365XD in addition to the standard National Merit/Achievement Finalist scholarship package.
- **Increase direct recruitment staff and implement revised territories.** Staff responsibilities have been reallocated to create a sixth Admission Counselor ("road runner") position on the recruitment staff, and recruitment territories have been reassigned to conform to Alabama ACRAO territories for improved coverage and efficiency.
- **Implement an electronic application.** UA has been a leading participant in a pilot implementation of the ACT "College Connector" program to provide electronic application opportunities for students at participating schools, and will continue to pursue this and other mechanisms for an electronic application process.
- **Provide electronic information and inquiry systems and opportunities.** In February 1996, the University made a three-year commitment to participate in the "CollegeView" program beginning with CollegeView's August 1996 release. The CollegeView program is a nationally networked college search

and information system operating through CD-based multi-media presentations on desktop computers located in over 3,500 high schools throughout the United States, with an expectation of 5,000 to 6,000 participating high schools by 1997-98 (plus additional schools in Europe and Asia). The CollegeView provides text-based information on over 3,000 two-year and four-year colleges, and specialized multi-media presentations on a fee basis. The University of Alabama is one of approximately 120 institutions with full multi-media presentations in the CollegeView system. Student users of the CollegeView system can send inquiries and information requests to the Admissions Office electronically, and the Admissions Office can directly download information on prospects from the CollegeView network. (An electronic application function is available but cannot be accommodated at this time due to insufficient computing support at UA at this time.) The Admissions Office also is now accessible through the Internet site via its World-Wide Web site under the University's homepage (*www.ua.edu*). The site provides extensive information on all aspects of admissions and enrollment, including multiple links to other relevant homepages across the University.

- **Significantly reduce the fee for the Capstone Summer Honors Program.** The fee for the Capstone Summer Honors Program has been reduced by 42% from $1,200 to $700 for 1997 to increase student access and interest, and more effectively compete with similar programs in this region offered at very low or no cost to the participant. The Capstone Summer Honors Program is a five-week on-campus (residential) program for high ability rising high school seniors. The students enroll in regular University courses plus a special seminar for a total of seven hours of college credit, participate in special enrichment activities, and compete for academic scholarships.

- **Implement additional on-campus visitation events.** New and expanded on-campus recruitment events have been initiated including Alabama School of Math and Science Day, National Merit Recognition Day, University Day (including a second day in February), and Birmingham/Jefferson County Day to increase the number of prospective students visiting the campus. Also, the College of Engineering moved its annual Engineering Day (E-Day) the Fall semester to increase the event's visibility and recruitment timeliness and competitiveness.

- **Establish a "Game-Day" campus visit program.** The Director of Athletics has agreed to donate an allotment of 300 tickets for each of the 1997 home football games scheduled in Tuscaloosa. Prospective students (seniors) and their parents and some high school counselors will be invited to special recruitment programs preceding each home game.

- **Re-establish the "friend on campus" personal correspondence program.** Members of the Admissions Office Student Recruitment Team and five student service organizations have been organized to conduct a systematic personal letter writing campaign for admitted applicants.

- **Expand the "UA Preview -- Just for Juniors" program.** The April 1996 on-campus pilot program of a special University of Alabama "college night" focusing specifically on high school juniors and their parents with full college, academic support, and student service representation with organized information sessions will be repeated in Tuscaloosa and taken "on the road" in April 1997 to Dothan, Huntsville, and Montgomery. This program also involves local alumni.

- **Reinstate the Academic Common Market for undergraduates.** The University has reactivated its participation in the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Academic common Market at the undergraduate level effective in January 1997, with the condition that students attending the University of Alabama through the Academic common Market must maintain a 2.5 grade point average to maintain the in-state tuition benefit. Participation at the undergraduate level was suspended in May 1995 effective for Fall 1996. (The Academic Common Market is an agreement under which students from participating states enroll in designated degree programs in other participating institutions in other states at in-state

tuition rates. The University of Alabama was recognized for 10 undergraduate degree programs for students from eight different SREB states.)

- **Enhance the appearance of the Admissions Office waiting areas.** New furniture was purchased in August 1996 for the visitor waiting areas in the Admissions Office (both 152 and 173 Rose). Additionally, office space in the Records Office vacated through reorganization and relocation was reallocated to the Admissions Office to create an additional private room for Admissions staff to meet with visiting prospects and their families (the offices assigned to most of the Admissions Counselors are too small to accommodate more than one visitor). The location of the Admissions Office in Rose Administration Building is not ideal, and pending relocation of the Admissions Office to the new Student Services Building in 1998-99, additional efforts to make the adjacent areas (such as the main lobby) friendlier and more welcoming in appearance, including seating and elimination of the front of the building as a smoking area, would be helpful.
- **Produce an updated Admissions video for on-campus use.** The "Admissions Video" originally produced in 1988 has been re-edited to replace former President Roger Sayers with President Andrew Sorensen, new title screens consistent with current recruitment and marketing materials have been added, and updated scenes drawn from other current video projects (including television spots, marketing videos created by individual colleges, and video materials prepared for the University's CollegeView presentation) have been inserted. Additional replacement footage is being acquired on an on-going basis and will be added along with a new soundtrack to create an almost completely new Admissions video by the end of the academic year -- at virtually no additional cost to the Admissions Office. (This recruitment initiative was completed through extensive support from several units in the University Relations Office.)
- **Create and utilize a campus recruitment planning group.** The Recruitment Planning and Coordination Council consisting of representatives of all college deans and administrative and service units directly related recruitment/enrollment support was established in July 1996 and has met on a scheduled basis since it was established.

Back to top.

Back to the Faculty Senate Home Page

Please send any suggestions to the *Senate Webmaster.*