

Address to Board of Trustees

November 6, 2009

Chairman Harding, Members of the Board, and President Meadors:

I want to thank the Board for this opportunity to address you and for your continued engagement and support for our academic mission. I particularly want to reiterate the faculty's appreciation for the recent acquisition of Web of Science. The academic needs are great and this database provides a valuable resource for both students and faculty at UCA.

I also want to congratulate President Meadors on reaching his, by my count, 128th day on the job. As each day goes by, it becomes increasingly clear just how great the challenges that face the new administration are: build cash reserves, control costs, grow revenue, recover student receivables, engender confidence internally and externally, and reduce our reliance on institutional scholarships while maintaining both student enrollment and quality. I truly believe that the best way, perhaps the only way, to surmount these extraordinary challenges is for the new administration to work with the faculty and staff to develop trust and to promote inclusive, collaborative and open decision-making that seeks consensus.

Why do I mention this now? Why is this imperative? The first reason is that our ability to minimally fulfill our core academic mission of educating the men and women who choose UCA is only becoming more difficult. We are steadily moving closer to the collapse of our people resources and our technological

infrastructure. Faculty struggle to do their jobs, to effectively teach their courses, to find required classes for students in their majors and minors. Early this summer, the Provost and the Senate Executive Committee worked together to create a list of current academic budget needs. The total cost was \$11.4 million. With the state budget cut announced on October 20th, the gap between academic needs and actual funding has now grown to \$11.9 million.

The second reason is that, notwithstanding the arrival of a new administration, morale has continued to decline. For the first time in my nine years at UCA, mid-career faculty—the immediate future of the university—are considering leaving for greener pastures. One recent communication from a faculty senator is representative of the problem. The email ended this way:

“The faculty submitting these questions normally are not a disgruntled bunch. The fact that they are questioning things a lot more may indicate that morale everywhere is becoming...even more serious...”

However, in the face of the growing level of concern on campus, I see hopeful signs. For one, the university has been more explicit in its pursuit of outstanding receivables—including over \$6m in student tuition and fees.ⁱ I can attest to this renewed effort, having personally received a letter from the Associate Controller that informed me that UCA was preparing to submit \$20 in alleged traffic fines to the state for withholding from my tax refund.

When I addressed the faculty in August, I shared six goals for the academic year. I would like to share three of them with you:

- the first: rebuild our institutional integrity through improved communication, more open and inclusive decision-making, and the realignment of reporting lines to better reflect the university's logical organization. Your creation of an audit committee is an important contribution to this effort that I applaud.
- the second: work collaboratively with the administration and the Budget Advisory Committee to construct a university budget that aligns clear institutional goals with consistent funding. We must grow revenue from student tuition and fees, and re-engage our private fundraising efforts to support the university's budget.
- the third: institutionalize a direct and productive relationship with the Board of Trustees that fosters honest dialogue and better mutual understanding. This process has started. Mr. Sims and I met in May and had a productive exchange. These meetings are very important to establishing this dialogue, and I am pleased that we will be meeting again in the next few weeks at any expensive restaurant he chooses.

All joking aside, I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to President Meadors and Provost Grahm for their clarity of purpose and personal resilience. As we confront today's challenges, we will test our abilities to lead, to communicate, to listen, to trust, and to compromise. I am, nevertheless, confident in the President's and Provost's skills to guide the university as we seek to turn the page and begin a new chapter. If any member of the Board has any

questions, I would be happy to address them now or by phone or email. Once again, thank you for your attention this afternoon.

ⁱ The amount of student receivables was around \$6.9m on October 27, 2009.