Investiture Address

Dr. Ken Kitts ~ August 28, 2015

University of North Alabama

Members of the platform party, trustees, distinguished guests, delegates, and UNA faculty, staff, students, and alumni: it is difficult to find words to adequately express my gratitude for your role in helping to

That's true of most good things in life. They are a function of collective efforts. That point was drilled

for the future. To date my journeys have carried me all over this campus, and from cookouts in Cherokee to tours of industrial sites in Huntsville; from meetings with local officials to stops in legislative offices in Montgomery; from witnessing a moving performance at Ivy Green to stepping onto the hallowed ground of the famous music recording studios just across the river.

Last year, when Dena and I talked about my possible transition to a presidency, we agreed that we would make a family move only if we could find a place that we could embrace, and that would embrace us back. We found it here. The people of Florence and the wider Shoals community have welcomed us with a warmth and hospitality that is unusual even by the standards of the ever-courteous South. But as genuine as this sentiment is, we understand that it is also a reflection of the love that the people here have for the University of North Alabama. Perhaps it's the age of the institution, perhaps it's the beauty of the campus. Whatever "it" is, there is an affinity here for this university that is magical.

We treasure that magic. The bond between UNA and the people of the Shoals is something to be celebrated and protected. But universities cannot be all things to all people. And so we need to begin organizing ourselves around some broad themes from which can flow more specific goals and action plans. The

Second, let us commit to **Provide an Extraordinary Experience for our Students**. To be clear, I believe we are in fact doing that now. But in the rapidly changing world of the early 21st century, we have to check ourselves constantly to ensure that we remain on the cutting edge of delivering a high-quality, personalized education that will open the right doors for our graduates.

By way of trying to bring some of this together, let's talk once again about our Lions. If you'll allow me one last newcomer observation, it is this: I know of no other public university in the country for which the mascot is more interwoven with daily life and campus culture.

Our athletic teams carry the name "Lions" onto the field of competition. Our performance groups play off the name with titles such as "The Lionettes," or "The Roar." We have facilities known as "The Mane Room," or "The Lion's Den." Our campus is dotted with amazing statuary of lions at play, lions standing guard, and yes, lions reading books. And we greet one another at alumni and spirit events with a simple but passionate Roar Lions! I watched with interest last year as interim President John Thornell would close his messages to campus with that same message: Roar Lions!

In short, this is a lion-crazy campus. And I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that for three decades now we have had live lion mascots living right here on campus – and right next door to the President's Home, no less.

Dena and I didn't know what to make of this lion culture at first. We stayed in the President's Home during our interview last October. We arrived late one afternoon, and Leo offered a very special welcome to us about 5:00am the next morning. I'll never forget the first time I heard that low rumble – absoT 6 0–0 074 (f)9 995 ()7

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