



STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Dr. Kenneth Kitts
University of North Alabama President

FROM: Kerigan Mardis
2024-2025 SGA President

RE: Campus Parking Concerns and Request for Solution

DATE: January 3, 2025

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year, I established an SGA Parking Ad Hoc Committee, as parking is the most pressing issue for students at this time. Therefore, the goal of this committee has been to examine the status of parking availability, collect feedback from campus stakeholders, and recommend possible solutions. With that, I would like to share with you our findings, address the increasing demand for parking, and recommend the addition of a parking structure or expanded parking facilities for our university.

Current Parking Challenges

Senate Surveys

I have been meeting bi-monthly with the Faculty and Staff Senate Presidents to discuss ongoing projects and initiatives within the three Senates. Given that parking has been a recurring topic of concern in these discussions, I developed three surveys on behalf of the SGA Parking Ad Hoc Committee. These surveys were distributed to the three Senates with the primary objective of collecting feedback regarding parking availability across campus. The results highlighted significant concerns:

- **Student Senate:** Of the **30** representatives surveyed, **96.7%** agree that additional parking is necessary, citing inadequate parking availability. Many expressed willingness to financially contribute to increasing parking capacity.
- **Staff Senate:** Of the **16** representatives surveyed, **100%** agree on the need for more parking. However, staff feel they are competing with students and faculty for spaces and are less willing to fund new initiatives. One Staff Senate member remarked: "Staff and faculty parking is incredibly limited. We are now in competition with residents and students for street parking as well. This is a university infrastructure issue."
- **Faculty Senate:** Of the **19** representatives surveyed, **88%** support expanding parking. Faculty expressed frustration that new construction projects often reduce parking supply, further aggravating the issue. One faculty member commented: "It is disappointing to see parking spaces

removed for construction without informing stakeholders. Maintaining or increasing parking capacity should be a top priority during new projects."

In summary, Faculty, Staff, and Student senate representatives unanimously agree that more parking is needed. The Senate groups also emphasized the importance of notifying stakeholders when parking spaces will be temporarily or permanently unavailable.

Student Feedback

With an effort to obtain guidance and feedback directly from students, SGA was able to pose a question to 10,188 students that were sent the Homecoming 2024 election ballot. Of the **10,188** students (representing Early College, Undergraduate, and Graduate students), **1,747** completed the ballot. Of the **1,747** responses, we received **191** responses to the question posed: What initiatives would you like for the Student Government Association to work on this semester (Fall 2024)?

Of the **191** responses, **70 (36%)** individuals referenced parking as an issue to be worked on. Some highlighted responses of reference are:

- “Adding more parking space to list of things UNA wants to build (as opposed to just taking parking space away)”
- “Can you do something about parking? Maybe implement no overnight parking in the parking deck. Or better yet charge a semester fee to get parking deck access parking to raise money. It’s full of cars that never move. Can we get parking lines on Pine Street? People leave huge gaps between cars.”
- “To influence UNA on more parking opportunities. Parking deck behind flowers?”

At the start of the semester, the SGA participated in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Scavenger Hunt, providing an opportunity for students to share feedback by leaving written notes. **47** feedback submissions were collected, with **30** of these highlighting parking as a key area for SGA to address. This feedback demonstrates a strong student concern regarding campus parking and underscores the need for SGA to prioritize this issue in our advocacy efforts.

Residential Specific Parking Constraints

Another group on campus that I have found to be disproportionately affected by the parking shortage on campus is north residential students. After learning that **50** parking spaces were closing for the construction of the new LaGrange residence hall, I collaborated with Housing and Residence Life (HRL), Facilities, and University Police to collect data on parking availability for north residents.

The data collected showed that this fall semester there were **1,018** north residential students with parking passes who needed to park overnight in close proximity to their dorms. Across all designated overnight parking areas, there are only **943** total spaces available to these students, many of which are shared with commuter students, faculty, and staff. Because of this, **82** students could not park near their residence at the start of the semester. Following the closure of **50** additional spaces, this number increased to **132** students. Because of this, I contacted the necessary parties to find a solution for the students and recommended that Lot M be opened for residential students as well. HRL and PD agreed to this for the duration of the LaGrange Residence Hall construction; this resulted in **251** additional spots being made available to this particular group of students.

However, I would like to mention that after the construction of the new residence hall, we will need to accommodate **190** more students. This means that even if Lot M is permanently opened for North

Residents and the **50** spots from Rice and Rivers Lot are restored, there still will not be enough spots for these residents. Moreover, allocating Lot M to residential parking will reduce spaces available for commuters, further straining resources for faculty, staff, and commuting students. While some might say parking is not a pressing issue for faculty, staff, and commuting students who could just park blocks away and walk during the day, it is undeniably an issue for north residents who should be able to park close to where they live.

Data Obtained from the Office of Institutional Research

The Student Government Association (SGA), in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), has gathered baseline data that provides a comprehensive overview of campus parking trends throughout a typical day. This report includes valuable information about parking availability, the number of students holding parking permits, and the distribution of commuters scheduled for face-to-face classes scheduled between 7:00 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. Please refer to **Addendum #1** for the full data report from OIR, which also addresses certain limitations and assumptions inherent in the analysis.

The key components of the report are as follows:

- **1,945** Commuter parking spaces on main campus
- **191** Designated residential parking spaces
- **2,136** Total student parking available on main campus

To assess parking capacity, the following calculation was made:

2,136 (total amount of student parking) – **1,418** (all residential students who have a permit assuming they have a car) = **718** spots left for commuters throughout the day

The report's charts indicate a significant parking shortage from Monday through Thursday between **9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.**, with the following parking deficits at maximum capacity for each day:

- **560** spaces short on Mondays
- **732** spaces short on Tuesdays
- **589** spaces short on Wednesdays
- **676** spaces short on Thursdays
- **110** spaces short on Fridays

These findings suggest that parking demand far exceeds available capacity during peak hours, particularly on weekdays. The information provides valuable insight into current parking challenges and can serve as a foundation for further discussions on improving parking solutions on campus.

We also have attached a map and a list of parking spaces available that was provided by Facilities Administration and Planning as another reference point. *See Addendum #2 and Addendum #3.*

Projected Growth in Parking Demand

The paragraphs above outline the current parking situation at our university. With a steady increase in enrollment and ongoing infrastructural expansion, it is imperative to evaluate parking availability and plan for future needs as these projects near completion. For example, the construction of the new stadium is expected to significantly increase parking demand on program days, as well as during other athletic events, conferences, and special gatherings. Similarly, as previously mentioned, the completion of the LaGrange residence hall will add more students requiring residential parking, further straining the already limited parking resources. This increased demand will also impact temporary

parking for visitors and service vehicles, as well as the daily parking needs of faculty, staff, and commuting students. Given the university's rapid growth and anticipated continued expansion, addressing the rising demand for parking is essential to support the needs of our growing community effectively. Proactively planning for these changes will be critical as we move forward.

Proposed Solution

Lot O Proposal

When considering solutions for the future, our SGA Parking Ad Hoc Committee recommends constructing a parking deck on Lot O as a long-term solution to address campus parking challenges. Lot O, located at the northern edge of campus, offers a strategic location. It is far enough from the main campus activities to avoid disruption, yet close enough to residence halls and academic buildings to remain easily accessible. Additionally, its proximity to the future Bank Independent Stadium and Flowers Hall makes it an ideal location for game-day parking. Currently, Lot O provides **149** parking spots primarily for students unable to find parking elsewhere. Nearby, Lot M offers approximately **303** spaces, nearly double the capacity of Lot O, and is currently designated for residential student parking due to the partial closure of Lot S. Should a parking deck be built on Lot O, Lot M could continue serving students during construction, minimizing disruptions to on-campus parking. Upon completion, the proposed parking deck could increase campus parking capacity by **600** spaces, complementing the existing parking deck, which currently provides **660** general student spaces. This expansion would significantly alleviate parking challenges, especially during high-demand events like games and special gatherings at the new stadium. Additionally, the deck design could include accommodations for electric vehicles, supporting the university's sustainability goals and enhancing UNA's appeal to environmentally conscious students and visitors.

Financial Considerations

Furthermore, Lot O's proximity to UNA's sports complexes offers significant opportunities for monetization. A parking deck at this location could generate revenue on game days and potentially extend monetization to regular parking use. For instance, if the proposed parking deck were to accommodate approximately **600** vehicles and guests were charged **\$10.00** per pass for day use, the university could earn an estimated **\$72,000** annually from home game day passes alone, based on six home football games in the fall and six home basketball games in the spring. This figure could increase with additional revenue from parking passes for other athletic events, such as baseball and soccer. Additionally, in a survey conducted by this committee, **80%** of the **Student Senate**, **61%** of the **Staff Senate**, and **57%** of the **Faculty Senate** representatives expressed willingness to financially contribute to the expansion of campus parking. This widespread support could help reduce the financial burden of construction on the university and offset costs. Additionally, a monetized parking deck could generate ongoing revenue, potentially allowing the university to recoup its investment over time. While constructing a parking deck represents a significant investment, it addresses a critical need shared by students, faculty, and staff. This project would alleviate current parking challenges, accommodate future growth, and enhance the overall campus experience. With strong stakeholder support and clear opportunities for revenue generation, the Lot O parking deck is a practical and forward-looking solution for UNA's parking needs.

Benefits of Parking Expansion

While the proposed parking deck represents a significant investment, its potential positive impact on the campus community and student success is profound. Addressing the current parking challenges would directly enhance the morale and overall satisfaction of staff, students, and faculty by alleviating

daily stressors associated with parking. An expansion of parking availability would not only improve convenience but also support punctuality, enabling students and faculty to arrive on time for classes and appointments. The assurance of reliable parking fosters a stronger sense of commitment among commuting students, encouraging consistent class attendance—a critical factor in academic success and retention. Additionally, faculty and staff have expressed shared frustrations about limited parking availability. Expanding parking resources would likely improve their job satisfaction by reducing daily inconveniences, promoting a more supportive work environment, and reinforcing the university's commitment to meeting their needs. Furthermore, the availability of ample and accessible parking could enhance UNA's appeal to prospective students, both residential and commuter. The knowledge that parking will be available near residence halls and academic buildings positions the university as a more practical and welcoming choice for prospective students and their families. Improved parking infrastructure would not only benefit the current campus population but also strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, directly supporting UNA's long-term growth and success.

Conclusion

Addressing the parking challenges at UNA is a critical step toward fostering a supportive and thriving campus environment. The findings and recommendations of the SGA Parking Ad Hoc Committee highlight both the urgent need for expanded parking facilities and the significant benefits such investments would bring to the university community. Constructing a parking deck at Lot O offers a strategic, sustainable, and forward-thinking solution that not only alleviates current parking constraints but also positions UNA for future growth. By improving parking accessibility, we can enhance morale, punctuality, and job satisfaction among faculty, staff, and students while encouraging class attendance and supporting student success and retention. Furthermore, the proposed parking deck presents opportunities for revenue generation, helping to offset costs and ensuring the university recoups its investment over time. With strong stakeholder support and a clear vision for how expanded parking aligns with UNA's long-term goals, we believe this initiative will significantly contribute to improving campus life, attracting prospective students, and reinforcing UNA's reputation as an institution that prioritizes the needs of its community. We urge the administration to prioritize this recommendation as a key infrastructure project that supports UNA's continued growth and success.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to addressing this pressing issue.