

June 28, 2016

Mr. Hank Huckaby, Chancellor Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia 270 Washington Street, SW Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Chancellor Huckaby:

The constituents that this Association represents are gravely concerned as it relates to the ongoing consolidation of Albany State University and Darton State College. Some of these concerns were voiced during a meeting on May 4, 2016, with Dr. Arthur N. Dunning, university president, and this Association's Board of Directors. It is believed that some of those and other concerns are more appropriate for you to address.

The absence of alumni representation on the Consolidation Implementation Committee is a primary concern. Where is the voice of over 13,000 ASU alumni in the consolidation process? Why, other than the utilization of the Principles for Consolidation on previous consolidations, was this Association excluded? The inclusion of an alumnus, Albany State University employee as mandated by policy, as a part of the Alumni Work Group has its inherent potential for a conflict of interest; and my appointment to the "newly formed New ASU Advisory Council" to provide advice on "measures that support economic vitality" is inadequate to constitute meaningful participation in the consolidation process. This consolidation is unique and alumni have a vested interest in the process, exclusion and marginalization are not acceptable.

Unlike the previous consolidations, there are racial implications and divisiveness that existed and continue to exist within the City of Albany, GA historically toward Albany State University from its founding, complicated by the addition of Darton State College within a fifteen mile radius and the historical discriminatory actions of the University System of Georgia toward this HBCU inclusive of the duplication of academic programs.

The approval of a nursing degree program at Darton State College is an example of this duplication. Such approval was unwarranted and the position statement supporting the request from Darton leadership was not rational or sound. This Association opposed such an academic program at Darton State College. Yet, recently it was announced there would be a Darton State College of Health Professionals, a distinction from the other Colleges within the New University notwithstanding the asserted consolidation of the two institutions. Why? Additionally, considering the alleged problems and/or issues relating to accreditation of Darton's nursing program, why is it deserving of any distinction? If there was going to be distinction and specific designation by educational entity then the other Colleges should be given this same distinction.

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There is the question of the "New" Albany State University. None of the other institutions involved in the consolidation process, known as traditionally white institutions (TWIs) were referenced as "new". It is obvious and implied that the consolidation of Albany State University and Darton State College would create a hybrid that would be unlike the two institutions existing separately.

This distinction of being "new" carries a connotation that Albany State University's previous existence was inferior, unattractive and unacceptable to the white populace of students and potential students and to dispel this notion "new" is the key word for doing so. The University System of Georgia was an active participant in the creation of and perpetuation of this perception and being referenced as "new" does not eradicate or excuse the history of discriminatory treatment. Said reference should be discontinued in that it constitutes disparate treatment in comparison to other previously consolidated institutions.

Initially it was announced that key positions inclusive of those known as the President's Cabinet would be filled by utilization of search firms. Why the departure from this announcement? Previously announced appointments considered to be cabinet level positions include the Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Vice President for Fiscal Affairs. Today, an interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs was appointed as well as interim director of Human Resources. Both of these positions are considered cabinet level positions.

Generally, appointments and hires are not viewed critically but within the context of the consolidation greater scrutiny is warranted to ensure the mission of Albany State University as traditionally recognized survives and not merely a Mission Statement of it being a HBCU. The mission will be implemented by those at the highest level of the university's organizational structure and continued assessment of appointments verses utilization of a search or other merit based employment process appears warranted.

The consolidation process weighs heavily on the minds and souls of our alumni. We are passionate about our history and more importantly our future. We ask for inclusion, transparency, fairness and equity as the consolidation process continues. We seek your intervention to address these concerns and future concerns. We look forward to your response to the concerns raised herein and will share it with our constituents and other stakeholders.

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Historically, alumni have supported Albany State University in numerous ways and we will continue to do so recognizing the importance and positive impact that higher education affords students and their families, southwest Georgia, the entire state, nation and international communities. We will, to the extent possible, support the consolidation effort but will not hesitate to become activists if warranted.

Sincerely,

Joycia C. Ricks, President

cc: Board of Regents

**ASUNAA Board of Directors**