



Dear University of Akron Community,

As we embark together on my first full academic year as the 19th president of The University of Akron, I felt that it was necessary to reach out, pass on some valuable information and thank you for being a valued member of this community. Just four months ago, I was honored to become president of my alma mater. I have learned so much and keep telling people in various forums that I proverbially continue to drink from a fierce, information-filled firehose.

I have spent most of the summer gathering and processing creative ideas to expand our visibility and impact, while also documenting a significant list of current challenges, weaknesses and opportunities. As part of our forward momentum, I opted to lift the hiring pause imposed by the previous administration. Upon the recommendation of our University leadership team, we prioritized certain vacancies and reduced the list by two-thirds. This, in conjunction with a modest reduction in operating expense budgets, has helped to alleviate some of our financial issues. All reductions have been built into the current year's budget and were applied to all units with only a few exceptions. As a result, the budget gap has been reduced significantly; it is, however, still too large to sustain indefinitely. For now, we have asked units to do their best to make the new budget work in service of our students. We will be permanently fixing our financial challenge in the coming five years as part of what we are calling our Vision 2030 effort, and are eager to share details of that vision as it is formulated over the coming weeks and months.

It is important that we all have a shared understanding of our current state as well as our desired (yet realistic) future state. Provost Wiencek and I would like to commence a visiting tour in small groups of no more than 50 to discuss our current environment and desired future for The University of Akron. These meetings will begin shortly after the census enrollment snapshot is known so that we can provide that important information as part of the discussions. The provost and I believe a personal conversation will allow for more opportunities to ask clarifying questions, receive meaningful, tailored responses and to encourage the sharing of new ideas.

The scale of our challenge is significant, but it is certainly surmountable. To that end, we will be embarking on a campus-wide effort that will build from our strategic values, ones that were developed via the University Council strategic planning process of the past year plus. These values reflect campus input on what The University of Akron should embrace.

These values—flourishing people, lifelong learning and social impact—will form the bedrock of a new SHARED vision for The University of Akron and will guide our thoughtful restructuring over the next five years, culminating in 2030. The process of visioning and the subsequent restructuring will rely on active participation by our students, faculty, staff, external stakeholders and Board of Trustees, just to name a few of the key constituency groups. We are working with our shared governance partners right now to build the membership of this important committee.

The core effort of this visioning group is to craft a Vision 2030 statement for what The University of Akron will be by the year 2030, with a clear basis for evaluation and measuring outcomes for success. All subsequent goals, plans, AKRs or activities will be driven by our need to attain the shared vision. We do anticipate that the structure of the University will continue to be modified to adjust to shifts in demands and priorities. This vision statement will become our proverbial North Star. I will be chairing this committee personally, and Chief Strategy Officer Dr. Matt Juravich will serve as support.

To aid in this long-range visioning, I have also identified seven areas focused on assessment of clear short-term priorities and opportunities. In addition to ongoing scrutiny of our finances, we will construct six teams for SWOT analyses: academics and enrollment; development; branding and marketing; organizational culture; athletics; and facilities. Membership and chairs of these groups will be established in coordination with already existing committees on University Council and Faculty Senate. Dr. Juravich will serve as the ambassador between groups and assure progress is achieved in a timely manner.

I am eager to gain your input on Vision 2030. My early experience at UA as an undergraduate student has shown me that University of Akron students can go anywhere from this place. I do want to close by sharing that we will be focused on our people and building a culture of trust, collaboration and shared goodwill. We have an incredible opportunity to make a lasting difference ... one that will benefit all of us and deliver on our promise for generations to come.

With earnest appreciation for your contributions,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Nemer", followed by a period.

R.J. Nemer

President

The University of Akron