**The University of West Alabama**
**Board of Trustees Regular Meeting**
**Bell Conference Center**
**Livingston, Alabama**
**June 2, 2025 – 10:50 a.m.**

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Hal Bloom called the meeting to order and requested that Ms. Edmonds call the roll.

**II. Roll Call**

Board members attending were Ms. Jennifer Agee, Mr. Hal Bloom, Mr. Joseph Brown, Mr. Jerry Groce, Mr. Randy Hillman, Mr. Michael Maddox, Mr. Tom Perry, Mr. Scott Stadthagen, Mr. Victor Vernon, and Ms. Jody Wise. Ms. Edmonds announced that a quorum was present.

**III. Approval of Minutes from March 3, 2025**

Mr. Bloom asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 3,2025, meeting. Ms. Jody Wise made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Joseph Brown seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

**V. Imstitutional Advancement**

Chaired by Mr. Randy Hillman, the committee approved the minutes from the December 2, 2024, meeting. Mr. Hillman acknowledged Dr. JJ Wedgworth and commented on the excellent work she and her team are doing in Institutional Advancement.

Dr. JJ Wedgworth presented a fundraising update, noting $2.11 million raised in 2025 (YTD), compared to $2.15 million in 2024 and $4.45 million in 2023 (which included a $3 million planned gift). FY25 funds were distributed across scholarships, athletics, programs, and other initiatives. Tiger Giving Day 2025 surpassed its $200,000 goal, raising $254,335 from 607 donors. Development priorities include new giving programs, data-driven strategies, and enhanced donor engagement.

Alumni Affairs highlighted efforts to increase engagement through events like UWA Happy Hours and traditions such as “Toast the Tassel.” Over 175 scholarships were awarded, and Giving Day saw strong alumni support. Homecoming is scheduled for October 23–25, 2025.

Sponsored Programs secured $6.5 million in funding in FY 2023–2024 and $5.9 million so far in FY 2024–2025. The Cahaba Biodiversity Center hosted 350+ visitors and received over $500,000 in funding and donations, with several infrastructure projects underway.

UWA is requesting $1 million in federal support for campus safety and is partnering with the City of Livingston on a $5.5 million infrastructure project. University Charter School graduated 48 students, with over 35% enrolling at UWA and $585,000 in total scholarships awarded. Dual enrollment and program alignment efforts continue to expand.

**VI. Athletics**

Chaired by Mr. Scott Stadthagen, the committee approved the minutes from the previous meeting held on December 2, 2024. The Athletics Review featured numerous highlights, including 114 student-athlete degrees conferred—marking the department’s second-highest total—along with 53 scholar-athlete awards, with women’s soccer earning the highest team GPA at 3.8.

Major coaching updates included the appointment of Scott Cochran as Head Football Coach, bringing in a notable staff of former Alabama and NFL athletes, and Ed Allen as Head Volleyball Coach, whose decorated career includes over 700 wins and multiple championships.

Spring sports saw a resurgence, with baseball capturing the GSC Tournament title and reaching the NCAA Regionals, while women’s track star Balikis Yakubu was again named GSC Track Athlete of the Year.

Updates on the evolving NCAA Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) policies were shared, contrasting Division I's broader institutional involvement with Division II's restrictions.

The 2025 football schedule was announced, including a “Week Zero Classic” opener and multiple home games.

* **Home Game Dates:**
	+ September 13 vs. University of Charleston
	+ September 20 vs. Barton College
	+ October 4 vs. Lincoln University (CA)
	+ October 18 vs. West Florida
	+ October 25 vs. Delta State (Homecoming)
	+ November 15 vs. Northeastern State (OK)

Mr. Brett Gilliland praised the Athletic Communications team led by Darrell Redden. Strategic efforts are underway to expand sports marketing and sponsorships, capitalizing on recent program successes and leadership additions. New initiatives include launching a women’s flag football program by 2026–2027 and exploring indoor track competitions to boost recruitment and scheduling flexibility. Finally, it was noted that the GSC currently consists of 12 schools, with only four supporting football, and expansion efforts are ongoing.

**VII. Facilities Committee**

Chaired by Mr. Joseph Brown, the committee approved minutes from March 3, 2025, meeting. Physical Plant Director Chris Egbert provided updates on several campus improvement projects, beginning with Foust Hall, an APSCA-approved project led by Seay, Seay & Litchfield Architects with a $2.2 million budget, currently 50% complete with HVAC replacement, new fire alarms, window replacements, and office reconfigurations, expected to finish by July 31, 2025. The Homer Field House Addition, designed by PH&J Architects at a cost of $4.7 million, is 35% complete with structural work ongoing, aiming for completion by December 2025. Land Hall, managed in-house for $405,000, is 80% complete with painting and carpet installation in progress, set to house the Admissions Office and Tour Center by May 2025. The Student Union Building project, designed by McKee & Associates with Hall Taylor Construction as construction manager, has preliminary costs exceeding the initial budget at $19 million, leading to redesign efforts and a delayed start date of September 2025, with completion now targeted for January 2027; approval was granted to increase spending up to $19 million after a motion by Mr. Jerry Groce, seconded by Mr. Victor Vernon. The Alabama Women’s Hall of Fame project, also by McKee & Associates, is estimated at $400,000 with final construction drawings near completion and expected to begin in July 2025 and finish by December 2025. Lastly, the Surplus Warehouse project, designed by Ward Scott Morris Architects with a $500,000 budget, is in the site survey and preliminary design stage, expected to start in September 2025 and complete by March 2026. The meeting concluded with an overview of the Board of Trustees project approval process, outlining steps from concept approval, preliminary design and budget approval, to final execution approval, ensuring projects include clear justification, defined scopes, guaranteed maximum prices, and identified funding before contract finalization.

*Mr. Brown requested a motion from the full Board of Trustees to approve the increase spending for the Student Union Building up to but not to exceed $19M. Mr. Jerry Groce made the motion and Mr. Joseph Brown seconded the motion and the motion was approved.*

**VIII. Finance Committee**

Chaired by Mr. Joseph Brown, the committee approved the minutes from the March 3, 2025, meeting. Vice President of Financial Affairs, Mr. Clete Beard, then presented the quarter-end financial summary comparing March 31 data from 2022 through 2025, highlighting growth in total revenue from approximately $57,658,014 in 2022 to $75,351,805 in 2025, with notable increases in state appropriations and online tuition revenue. Expenses also rose from $45.5 million in 2022 to $59.4 million in 2025, resulting in a surplus of nearly $16 million for 2025. Mr. Beard shared that the Tuition and Fees Committee, chaired by Mr. Byron Thetford, proposed the Fiscal Year 2026 tuition and fee schedule, which was approved following a motion by Mr. Victor Vernon and a second by Mr. Scott Stadthagen. Mr. Beard then presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which projects total revenue of $106,836,469 and expenses of $106,072,135 leaving a surplus of $764,334. He noted this is the university’s first budget exceeding $100 million, attributing growth to strong state appropriations, increasing on-campus and online enrollment, and higher dorm occupancy. Dr. Fritch addressed employee raises, stating the proposed budget includes a 4% across-the-board increase, with 2% planned for October 1st and the remaining 2% on April 1st, contingent upon financial performance, reinforcing that the university community benefits collectively from institutional success. Mr. Beard also mentioned that undergraduate tuition and fees have remained unchanged for eight years. Mr. Brown called for a motion to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget, which was made by Mr. Victor Vernon, seconded by Mr. Bloom, and approved, with the budget to move forward for final board approval.

*Mr. Brown requested a motion from the full Board of Trustees to approve the Tuition and Fee schedule for Fiscal Year 2026. Mr. Tom Perry mad a motion to approve the Tuition and Fee Schedule and Ms. Jody Wise seconded the motion and the motion was approved.*

*Mr. Brown requested a motion from the full Board of Trustees to approve the budget for Fiscal Year 2026. Mr. Hal Bloom made a motion to approve the the budget for Fiscal Year 2026 and Mr. Tom Perry seconded the motion and the motion was approved.*

**IX. Report from the University President**

President Fritch shard a list of events and activities he has participated in since the last Board of Trustees meeting on March 3, 2025.

**President’s Events & Activities**

3/4/25 UWA Foundation Board Meeting

3/4/25 Men’s Basketball GSC Quarterfinal at University of Montevallo

3/5/25 Finance Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

3/5/25 “Let’s Finish This Semester Strong” UWA CARES Event

3/6/25 Women Who Shape the State Luncheon at The Club in Birmingham honoring Dr. JJ Wedgworth

3/7/25 PE Sports and Exercise Law Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

3/7/25 UWA Baseball

3/8/25 UWA Baseball

3/8/25 UWA Softball

3/9/25 Methods of Teaching Mathematics Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

3/9/25 College of Nursing (Listen and Learn)

3/11/25 Business Administration, Management, and Marketing Department (Listen and Learn)

3/12/25 Business Office (Listen and Learn)

3/12/25 UWA Academic Research Conference Awards Dinner

3/13/25 Greek Awards Dinner

3/14/25 University Safety and Security (Listen and Learn)

3/14/25 UWA Spring Football Game

3/14/25 UWA Drawdown

3/15/25 Spring Preview Day

3/15/25 UWA Baseball

3/15/25 UWA Softball

3/17/25 Engineering and Technology Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

3/17/25 Meeting with Sumter County Commissioners

3/18/25 Office of Sponsored Programs (Listen and Learn)

3/18/25 Guest Speaker at Faculty Senate

3/19/25 NYFEA Conference Welcome

3/19/25 Instructional Leadership and Support Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

3/19/25 Meeting with Dr. Thomas Huebner, President at Meridian Community College

3/20/25 Tour of the Campus School

3/31/25 Served on a panel for the UWA Professional Development Course

3/31/25 Student Affairs (Listen and Learn)

4/1/25 IMC Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

4/1/25 Meeting with The Hope Institute

4/1/25 Meeting with Architects regarding the SUB Project

4/2/25 Higher Education Partnership Board Meeting

4/2/25 Higher Education Partnership Legislative Reception

4/3/25 Welcome Remarks to the 2025 Spring Residency Students

4/3/25 Natural Sciences and Mathematics (Listen and Learn)

4/4/25 Meeting with Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences

4/4/25 Department of Communications and Creative Arts and Department of Psychology and Sociology (Listen and Learn)

4/5/25 UCS Ball Drop

4/6/25 UWA Cheer Nationals Showcase

4/7/25 Physical Plant (Listen and Learn)

4/7/25 Livingston Strategic Planning Session

4/7/25 Meeting with Students regarding Greek Life

4/7/2025 UWA Cheer Nationals Showcase (round 2)

4/8/25 Spring Career Fair

4/8/25 Meeting with The Business Council of Alabama

4/8/25 Phi Kappa Phi Initiation

4/9/25 College of Education Faculty (Listen and Learn)

4/9/25 Honors Day: College of Business

4/9/25 Honors Day: College of Liberal Arts

4/10/25 Served Pizza to faculty/staff/students for UWA Giving Day

4/10/25 Economic and Workforce Development, Museum and CNA Staff (Listen and Learn)

4/10/25 Honors Day: College of Education

4/10/25 Tiger Giving Day Celebration

4/11/25 Meeting with The Tuscaloosa Y

4/11/25 Accounting, Finance, and Economics (Listen and Learn)

4/14/25 Office of Strategic Communications (Listen and Learn)

4/14/25 Education Technology Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

4/14/25 Office of Admissions, CARES, and SSS (Listen and Learn)

4/15/25 Gulf South Conference Board of Directors Meeting

4/15/25 Meeting with Alabama Council of Higher Education

4/15/25 Phi Kappa Phi Spring Colloquium

4/16/25 Office of Alumni, Development, and UWA Foundation (Listen and Learn)

4/16/25 2025 Years of Service and Retirement Reception

4/16/25 Judge for Miss Paragon

4/17/25 Lunch with Adonis Williams; SGA President

4/17/25 SpringFest

4/18/25 Orientation Welcome

4/18/25 SGA President’s Dinner

4/18/25 UWA Baseball

4/19/25 Sucarnochee Folklife Festival

4/19/25 UWA Baseball

4/19/25 UWA Softball

4/21/25 International Programs and The One Stop (Listen and Learn)

4/21/25 Developmental Psychology Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

4/22/25 Information Technology (Listen and Learn)

4/22/25 York Lions Club Speaking Engagement

4/23/25 Human Resources (Listen and Learn)

4/24/25-4/25/25 President’s Cabinet Strategic Planning Retreat

4/26/25 Arts at the Amp

4/28/25 Provost Office and Registrar’s Office (Listen and Learn)

4/28/25 Natural Sciences and Mathematics Groups 2 & 3 (Listen and Learn)

4/28/25 Auto Brake & Steer and Suspension Classroom Visit (Listen and Learn)

4/29/25 The Trio SSS Awards Banquet

4/30/25 Welcome Remarks for Kids First Presents: Aspiring Leader Academy

4/30/25 Meeting with Katie Britt’s Field Representative, Kelli Wolfe

4/30/25 College of Education Staff (Listen and Learn)

4/30/25 Toast the Tassel: Graduation Celebration for the Class of 2025

5/1/25 Passed Out Popsicles to students

5/1/25 University Safety and Security Group 2 (Listen and Learn)

5/1/25 Choctaw and Marengo County Alumni Event at Hello Sunshine Eats in Linden, AL

5/5/25 Executive Committee Meeting for the Board of Trustees

5/5/25 Athletics Staff (Listen and Learn)

5/6/25 Deliver lunch to Campus School for Teacher Appreciation Week

5/6/25 Participated in the Amazing Shake at University Charter School

5/7/25 Graduation Luncheon with International Programs

5/7/25 College of Nursing Convocation

5/8/25 Spring Commencement (EDD, EDS, MED)

5/8/25 EDD Graduation Reception

5/8/25 Speaker for the Golden Apple Reception in Meridian, MS

5/9/25 Spring Commencement (COLA, NSM, COB)

5/9/25 Spring Commencement (Engineering and Technology, Nursing, and College of Education)

5/9/25 Graduation Celebration for Adonis Williams (SGA President)

5/20/25 Financial Aid (Listen and Learn)

5/21/25 City of Livingston Strategic Planning Committee

5/21/25 Online Program (Listen and Learn)

5/22/25 Orientation Welcome

5/23/25 Tuscaloosa County Alumni Event at The Alamite in Tuscaloosa, AL

5/29/25-5/31/25 GSC Summer Conference in Pensacola, FL

Dr. Fritch began his report by taking a few minutes to recognize and congratulate Dr. RT Floyd on his introduction to the Gulf South Conference Hall of Fame at the 2026 Annual Conference. He then thanked the Board for approving the 2026 Tuition and Fee Schedule, noting that undergraduate tuition will not increase for the eighth consecutive year. Dr. Fritch emphasized how important it is to keep the cost of education down for undergraduate students and expressed his appreciation for the Board’s support in this effort.

He highlighted key aspects of the fiscal year 2026 budget, including a nearly $2 million increase in Operations and Maintenance appropriations, which will be significantly beneficial to the university. Dr. Fritch expressed gratitude to several Board members, including Leader Stadthagen, Joseph Brown, Tom Perry, and Hal Bloom, for their instrumental roles in advocating for these funds and ensuring the university continues to receive the support needed to advance student success.

Dr. Fritch also discussed a one-page infographic, illustrating that UWA remains the lowest per FTE student funded public institution in Alabama. He stressed the importance of changing this narrative, noting that despite being a high-performing institution in terms of student success, UWA is not being rewarded financially at the same level as its peers. He explained that increases of $2,000 to $5,000 per FTE student in appropriations would greatly enhance the university’s ability to improve persistence, retention, and completion rates. The infographic was prepared at the request of key legislative leaders in Montgomery to better understand and quantify this funding disparity. Dr. Fritch stated that nearly 85% of UWA’s online students are in-state residents, highlighting the university’s vital role in serving Alabama students who may not otherwise have access to higher education opportunities. He urged the Board to support efforts to advocate for equitable funding moving forward.

Dr. Fritch reported on the spring commencement, noting that nearly 900 students graduated across three ceremonies, with approximately 1,230 guests attending. He also outlined several upcoming initiatives, including the Strategic Plan, Economic Impact Study, Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan, Campus Master Plan, Comprehensive Deferred Maintenance Plan, Financial Composite Index assessment, Registrar’s Needs Assessment, a Comprehensive Sports Marketing and Broad-Based Branding Plan, a Campus Climate Survey, a Comprehensive Policy and Procedure Review, the University Emergency Response Plan, and the Continuity of Operations Plan. A resolution was presented recognizing outgoing Board President Mr. Hal Bloom for his service.

Dr. Fritch shared that UWA has been designated as an “Opportunity Institution” under the new Carnegie classification, an honor given to fewer than 500 colleges and universities nationwide. This classification recognizes institutions that provide high access while also delivering high wages and compensation upon graduation.

He concluded his report by announcing that Presidential Inauguration Week will take place September 8–12, with the Investiture Ceremony scheduled for Friday, September 12 at 10:00 AM.

**X. Report from the Board President**

***Officers for June 2025-June 2028:*** *Mr. Bloom presented the slate of officers for June 2025-June 2028. Mr. Bloom requested a motion to accept the the officers for June 2025-June 2028. Mr. Victor Vernon made a motion to accept the offices for June 2025-June 2028 and Mr. Joseph Brown seconded the motion and the motion passed.*

***Board Meeting Schedule:*** *Mr. Joseph Brown presented the tentative board meeting schedule for September 8, 2025 through June 1, 2026. Mr. Tom Perry requested a motion to approve the 2025-2026 Board Meeting Schedule and Ms. Jody Wise seconded the motion and the motion passed.*

Mr. Brown formed an ad hoc committee to to review the Board of Trustees Bylaws. Mr.Brown asked Ms. Jody Wise to chair the committee and Mr. Jerry Groce, Mr. Scott Stadthagen, and Mr. Tom Perry to serve.

Mr. Brown asked Ms. Mary Grace Edmonds to begin distributing mileage reimbursement forms at all meetings, starting with the meeting on Monday, September 8, 2025. Mr. Brown also asked Ms. Edmonds to be prepared to give an update on upcoming events happening on campus that will require board participation.

Mr. Brown has requested that each board meeting begin with a campus safety report from Campus Security.

**XI. Other Business**

Ms. Jody Wise announced the passing of Dr. Joe Wilkins, Emeritus Professor of History, on Saturday, May 31, sharing fond memories that were echoed by Mr. Randy Hillman. Dr. Wilkins, who joined UWA in 1978 and served until his retirement in 2006, was instrumental in launching the University’s online programs in 2002, paving the way for significant growth and innovation in distance education. His leadership expanded graduate enrollment from under 300 to over 1,800 students and positioned UWA to adapt effectively to societal changes, including the shift to online learning during the pandemic. Dr. Wilkins is fondly remembered for his dedication to teaching, advising, and advancing educational access for students across Alabama and beyond. Service arrangements will be shared when available.

Mr. Victor Vernon asked Dr. Fritch about any changes to the immigration status of international students. Dr. Fritch responded that while the matter is complex, there has been one student affected by a visa revocation due to a prior altercation at another location, which was ultimately deemed a non-issue; however, the student will still need to leave and return under a new visa. No widespread impacts have been observed, but the situation continues to be monitored closely.

**XII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**
**Mary Grace Edmonds**