The External Affairs committee met yesterday. Mark Lanier, assistant to the chancellor, provided a legislative update by reviewing the previous legislative session. He shared that the status of the enrollment increase funding from the last session has been delayed until January. The overall enrollment growth formula is currently being reviewed by a committee appointed at the system level. The new formula is likely to include recognition of performance. In preparation for the 2018 session, Mr. Lanier and the chancellor have met with members of the regional delegation and others to talk with them about key university priorities. Mr. Lanier told the committee the list of 2018 priorities is being created and would likely include continued support for enrollment growth funding, planning for capital needs, and a possible authorization for housing plans. The full list of priorities will be shared with the board when it is completed.

Mr. Lanier also spoke briefly about federal initiatives that could impact the university such as continuing to monitor development of tax reform, as it relates to higher education in the form of tax credits and deductions for charitable giving. The development of the federal budget is also being closely monitored as it relates to financial aid programs. Mr. Lanier will also email the board with information about three relevant studies which show current trends in student aid.

Eddie Stuart, vice chancellor for university advancement, provided a review of the comprehensive fundraising program. Working with philanthropic counsel, Alexander Haas out of Atlanta, the division has been working to develop a campaign strategy, conduct a feasibility study, and make recommendations related to campaign timeline and target. During this process, the advancement team has been working with university leadership on developing a case for support, engaging volunteer leaders and conducting discussions with donors to better gauge their impression of the image of the university and their interest in supporting initiatives. This study will help to provide direction and help determine future courses of action in respect to next steps in fundraising.

Lastly, the committee did vote on an action item that was discussed in closed session and the item will be brought before the full board in closed session.