Greetings,

I would like to welcome all of the incoming students to UAB! Whether you are a freshman, a transfer student, or an international student, the Blazer family is glad to have you. I want to also welcome back all returning students to UAB. I hope you all had a great summer and are ready for an amazing year. The Office of Student Life started the semester with a very successful Welcome Week that was kicked off by a concert on the Green featuring Hip-Hop star B.o.B. Throughout the week there were opportunities to get involved in campus organizations (plus plenty of free food and T-shirts). The Undergraduate Student Government is looking forward to a productive and successful year advocating for fellow students. We welcome any and all input in order to ensure that we can move forward together while at this great university. This address will discuss the upcoming student referendum, Student Health and Wellness, dining, new personnel and building additions to UAB, and USGA open office hours.

Student Referendum

As many of you know, the decision was made on June 1st, 2015 by President Watts to begin the process of returning the football, bowling, and rifle programs at UAB. This was a decision that the Undergraduate Student Government Association, the City of Birmingham, alumni and faculty worked hard to help bring to fruition. The assessment of the December 2nd, 2014 decision and the fundraising effort to return the sports was spearheaded by the Athletic Assessment Task Force which was composed of students, faculty and community members. After financial commitments were made by alumni and the City of Birmingham, the Task Force reached out to the multiple student governments at UAB with a request to make a similar commitment. The request was accepted by the Undergraduate Student Government. We drafted Resolution SU-01-15 Additional Support for the Reinstatement of Football, Bowling and Rifle. The Resolution states that USGA proposes a $25 per semester student fee in order to help the return and sustainability of the three returning sports. The Senate reached out to many constituents in their respective schools to gather student feedback on the Resolution. The Senate then voted on the Resolution with 19 voting in support and 3 voting against. This sent a strong message to administrators and the community that students are willing to commit and take ownership in athletic success at UAB.

Though the university has committed to returning these sports, there is still one final step to ensuring their success and sustainability. The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees would like to hear from the student body directly that they
are willing to support the return of the three sports. On September 29th and 30th, there will be a student vote to support USGA’s Resolution. **We ask that you vote yes to support the sustainability of football, bowling and rifle at UAB.** Voting yes is not only a vote for UAB, but a vote for Birmingham.

**Student Services**

Since the passing of Resolution SP-01-15 *Sexual Health*, meetings have been held over the summer with the Student Health and Wellness Center's Executive Director, Jake Baggot and USGA Vice President of Student Services, Catherine McCarthy. During these meetings the provisions of the resolution as well as recent changes made at the health center were discussed. These changes included the Safe Zone training of the staff, the addition of the Sexual Health Clinic, as well as ongoing efforts to recruit additional healthcare providers such as a psychiatric nurse practitioner and nutritionist. The center is working diligently to increase access to contraception, STI testing, as well as mental health services. A **USGA Town Hall will be held on Monday, September 14th from 5:30-6:30 in the Blazer RLC to discuss these changes in-depth as well as address any student concerns.**

**Dining**

The 2015-2016 academic year is the end of Sodexo's contract at UAB. Sodexo, UAB's current dining provider, has been under contract at UAB for the last decade. Envision Strategies, an independent firm assessing the current dining situation at UAB, is currently holding meetings with stakeholders on campus. Their job is to gather information on what is working and not working at UAB. Envision will be holding open student focus groups on September 9th and 10th. We encourage you all to attend these focus groups. The process has also begun to form a campus-wide committee that will help to assess the situation, recommend, and ultimately choose a firm that will provide dining at UAB in the future. The USGA representative on the committee is School of Public Health Senator Nirja Gajjar (ngajjar@uab.edu).

**New Personnel and Building Additions**

UAB has recently brought on new members to the Blazer family in key positions in administration. One addition is a very important position that last year’s USGA administration advocated for: the Vice President of Student Affairs. This position is vital to student success by amplifying the student voice in the University President's Cabinet. This position is held by Dr. John Jones. Our new Chief Information Officer is Dr. Curt Carver. He recently held this position for the Georgia System which includes more
than 30 universities. UAB’s new Vice Provost for Enrollment Management is Bradley Barnes. We are currently in the process of finding a new Vice President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

As you all know, we debuted a new residence hall this fall. It will house more than 700 students. It is truly a collaborative learning space for freshmen to gather and exchange thoughts and information with fellow Blazers. Later this semester, the Hill Student Center will start serving food. The dining options will be Panera Bread, Full Moon BBQ, and Mein Bowl (a Sodexo concept). The grand opening will be in January when students return from winter break.

Office Hours

A new initiative that USGA will be implementing this year is open office hours. During these office hours, members of the Executive Council will be available in Campus Rec Center Room 190 to answer questions pertaining to the student body and their respective position. USGA believes that this open line of communication will be vital to ensuring that students are always knowledgeable on what is happening on campus. We encourage the student body to take advantage of these open office hours so that you are better informed when UAB administration makes important decisions regarding the student body. The open office hours will begin during the week of September 7th. The schedule will be as follows:

President, Garrett Stephens: Monday and Friday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Executive Vice President, Briana Miller: Monday 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Chief of Staff, Weslie Shannon: Wednesday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
VP of Student Services, Catherine McCarty: Tuesday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
VP of Communications, Alinea Esensoy: Tuesday 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
VP of Finance, Chirag Patel: Thursday 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

In closing, I would like to reiterate how excited the USGA is to welcome everyone back to UAB. We are looking forward to working collaboratively with stakeholders across campus and we encourage anyone and everyone to get involved on campus. We encourage you to make your voice heard regarding issues from dining to new buildings to student health, and most importantly we encourage you to vote yes on September 29th and 30th. My door is always open and you can always email me at usga@uab.edu.

Garrett Stephens
USGA President