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We should stimulate the development of what we can call New Arkansans, while doing all we can to retain current Arkansans. We can do this by attracting and retaining students who then, in partnership with the private sector and along with their Arkansas peers, live, work and play here in Arkansas after they complete their U of A degrees.

I believe that every student who chooses to come to the University of Arkansas from another state should become a “New Arkansan.” That is, remain here in the state along with our resident students, making an impact for years to come. In some ways, this idea is the logical extension of the New Arkansan Non-Resident Tuition Award Scholarship (NRTA). This scholarship has been instrumental in bringing qualifying students from around the country to the university by making their tuition and fees more affordable. The NRTA scholarship covers some of the difference between out-of-state and in-state tuition, which makes the University of Arkansas an attractive destination due to our great value and price, as well as our premier academic experience. Increasing the number of nonresident students has also helped keep tuition and fee increases for Arkansans to a minimum. It was named the New Arkansans NRTA due to the belief that many students would ultimately remain in Arkansas after graduation, where their degrees would be put to use for the benefit of the state.

Indeed, we know this to be the case, though it’s difficult to determine exactly how many former out-of-state students start careers here and remain. The best tool we have to acquire this information is through the First Destination Surveys we send to graduates up to six months after graduation. So with a survey response rate of 84%, we estimate that roughly 22% of the out of state graduates from the class of 2018 were still in the state six months after graduation (or 458 of the 2,079 out of state students who answered the survey). For 2019, the numbers were almost identical. While this

represents more than 900 graduates originally from out of state who remained in Arkansas over the last two years, I think we can get these numbers up.

One thing we figured out was that students who come here as undergraduates and want to continue their education leave the state for graduate school because the cost to them is considerably lower elsewhere. So we decided to create a version of the New Arkansan NRTA for graduate students. We’re calling this new program the Chancellor’s Graduate Student Non-Resident Tuition Scholarship. Like the undergraduate version, graduates will have to meet some basic academic requirements, but if they do they will be eligible for tuition that is just 30% above the in-state rate. That’s much lower than the current graduate nonresident rate they would otherwise have to pay without the scholarship. We think this will help boost graduate enrollment, which is one of our campus priorities. More importantly, some of these graduates with advanced degrees will remain in the state, hopefully even starting a business or licensing their technology here instead of elsewhere.

I would also like to see us come up with a more comprehensive career services effort for our students that helps prepare them for the transition from the university to careers or further education. This will, of course, help all students, not just nonresident students. I’ve already mentioned the need for a career center focused on graduate students in action item 3, so I won’t repeat that there. This would be an important piece of the plan, as would enhancing our overall career services efforts.

Our career services team already does an excellent job with what they have, but they are understaffed compared to our peer institutions. In fact, we have one of the highest student to career counselor ratios in the SEC – one for every 5,443 students (compared to Texas A&M, for example, which has one for every 3,473 students). Nor are these counselors uniformly placed among the colleges. For instance, the Walton College, with a spring enrollment of 6,068, has 3 full-time career counselors and a director of employer relations, while the Fulbright College, with a spring enrollment of 7,226 students, has one director of employer relations and no career counselors working solely with Fulbright students. The Fay Jones School has one career counselor while Bumpers has only a director of employer relations and no dedicated career counselor. The Graduate School has one part-time GA who provides career advising to graduate students.

These directors of employer relations are particularly useful because they help attract employers to campus and develop lasting professional relationships with organizations that recruit and hire students, which in turn drives the creation of internships and cooperative education experiences with regional and state companies. Career counselors also may assist in these efforts, but their main efforts are directed toward helping prepare students to be strong candidates for professional and academic opportunities. While colleges make strategic determinations about whether they need a career counselor or a D.E.R., I think most would prefer it was not an either/or proposition, given that both are vital pieces in helping students achieve their desired post-graduation outcomes. Nor can the Career Development Center, which has only one full-time and two part-time general career counselors currently providing advising to all students, make up for staffing shortages. Indeed, Angela Williams, assistant vice chancellor for Career Services, estimates current staff levels can only reach about 30% of campus. We need to put our heads together and figure out how we can change this by developing a comprehensive campus career services plan.

Returning to internships and cooperative learning experiences - these are particularly important because of the high conversion rate of internships to full-time jobs. Students get to learn about the culture and climate of a company while employers can determine if an intern is capable, reliable, and well-matched. According to a report by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, in 2019 just over 56% of internships and co-ops resulted in full-time hires, making them an important gateway to employment. As such, I would like us to create more internship and cooperative learning opportunities for our students. Exciting programs such as J.B. Hunt on the Hill, which launched in 2018, can serve as inspiration for other companies. The trucking giant opened an office on the University of Arkansas campus dedicated to helping students gain real-world experience within the transportation and logistics industry. Each semester, this program provides up to 60 interns with the opportunity to work with several of the company's key business areas, including customer experience, engineering and technology. To increase the number of available internships and other experiences for our students, we need the cooperation of businesses and companies across the state. This would be a win-win for our students and the businesses.

As I mentioned in a previous paper, to better connect with the private sector we will be hiring 2-3 private sector liaisons/facilitators tasked to interface with businesses and industry. These staff will provide information to the private sector on services and opportunities available at the university, communicate private sector wants and needs to appropriate parties inside the university, and help the private sector connect with appropriate faculty and staff expertise within the university. They can and should also be alert to internship and cooperative learning opportunities in the course of their duties, which they can refer to our career services professionals as they come in.

We already know that there will be a declining number of high school students in the years ahead — some predictions indicate declines as much as 30% — which

will mean fewer college graduates. This will almost certainly create state labor shortages. If we can further incentivize nonresident students to stay in the area after graduation, this will help mitigate those shortages. The goal is to make nonresident graduates better aware of what opportunities are available to them if they do stay, and get them prepared to make the most of those opportunities. We can do a better job of guiding them

toward internships and cooperative learning experiences that frequently lead to jobs. There are lots of reasons why graduates might want to go elsewhere after graduation, but lack of preparation for the job market and knowledge of opportunities in Arkansas should not be among them.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Steinmetz,
Chancellor, University of Arkansas