



*The*  
**NEXT**  
**LEVEL**  
*Initiative*



# Message from the Campaign Chair

Positive economic growth and community well-being always requires a long-term, yet nimble strategy, combined with bold approaches, focused execution and the leadership to make it happen. The 21st century economy is rich with opportunity for the West Alabama region. The leadership of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama has chosen to capitalize on new opportunities by developing this *Next Level* five-year plan. Building on the success of our existing *Working As 1* programming, embracing change with our strong entrepreneurial spirit and focused innovative thinking; *Next Level* will concentrate on four key initiatives going forward:

- Lead Workforce Readiness and Quality Education
- Diversify Our Economic Growth
- Engage the Community To Create True Quality of Place
- Drive Public Policy and Business Advocacy

This *Next Level* five-year initiative is not a plan created by our Chamber board and staff. It is the plan of all the communities in the West Alabama region because it is the culmination of a broad spectrum of one-on-one interviews throughout the area, through which community leadership in both the public and private sectors provided individual input about the programming that is important to all of us.



## Jason Hoff

*President and CEO*

*Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc.*

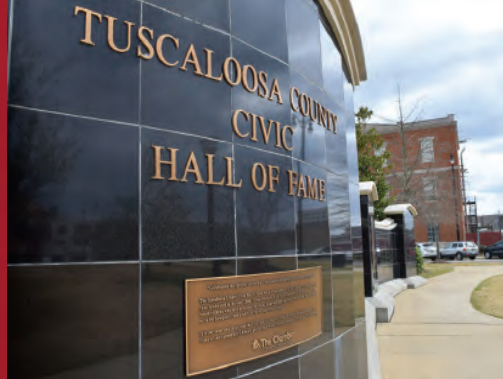
I have been personally involved in the planning phases of our new five-year initiative. I fully believe in and am committed to both the process and the program of work. I am confident that you, along with the many public and private leaders who are already on board, will see the vital importance of working together to make our region all it can and should be!



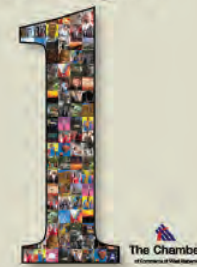
# HOW WE STARTED

The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama has a proud and rich history of being West Alabama's premier business organization, tracing its roots to June 1, 1900 with the founding of The Commercial Club. More than a century and a few name changes later, the Chamber has consistently played a pivotal role in initiatives that have transformed the Tuscaloosa metro area into a prime location to live, work and enjoy a high quality of life.

In 2012, the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama embarked on a bold journey to further enhance the organization's economic and community development impact. With the help of Funding Solutions, a nationally-recognized strategic planning and resource development firm based in Austin, Texas, extensive market research and dozens of community interviews were conducted to determine the Chamber's path forward.



working as



This information led to the dynamic, five-year strategic plan known as *Working As 1* and more than \$3 million in investment from Chamber members.

The *Working As 1* initiative focused on five priority areas:

- EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE READINESS
- RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL GROWTH
- LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION
- PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY





# WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

As directed by the goals and objectives of the *Working As 1* strategic plan, the Chamber has led, partnered with and/or played a critical support role in a number of community success stories, including:

## TRANSFORMING TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

The Chamber impacts legislation and led the successful campaign for the 30-year ad valorem referendum, which will ensure stable funding for school systems in Tuscaloosa County for a generation. The Chamber played an instrumental role in *Transforming Tuscaloosa* legislation, resulting in millions of dollars for local road projects through the Tuscaloosa County Road Improvement Commission.



## ON THE FRONT LINES OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber's contract with the City of Tuscaloosa for retail recruitment and development services has resulted in millions of dollars in development and created hundreds of new jobs.

**80+  
NEW-TO-  
MARKET  
RETAILERS**



**MILLIONS  
IN SALES TAX**

## DRIVING WORKFORCE

The Chamber's leadership and management of *West Alabama Works* serves nine counties through hiring fairs, Worlds of Work and securing millions in grant funding, while becoming the model for workforce development councils statewide.



**4500+  
STUDENTS**

**125  
COMPANIES**

**900+  
VOLUNTEERS**



## ON THE EDGE OF INNOVATION

A partnership with The University of Alabama and the City of Tuscaloosa to create *The Edge* has mentored hundreds of entrepreneurs and secured grants to construct a permanent facility.

**\$9 MILLION  
GRANT FUNDING**



**75+  
ENTREPRENEURS  
HOUSED**

**300+  
MENTORSHIPS**



## SPEARHEADING BUY LOCAL

Leading an aggressive multimedia campaign encourages shoppers to spend their tax dollars in the local market, and has resulted in more than \$900,000 annually in value in billboard, print, television, radio and online advertisements.

## COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Chamber members influence community policy issues through groups such as the Mayor's Business Advisory Task Force, the Minority Business Council and the Tuscaloosa Transportation Advocacy Group.



# WHERE WE'RE GOING



## DIVERSIFY OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Leverage *The Edge* to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, high-tech commercialization initiatives and small business development
- Partner with The University of Alabama and area leaders to recruit knowledge-based economic development and create "technology villages" in rural areas
- Promote "smart growth" principles in collaboration with local government officials
- Continue efforts to expand new retail offerings



## ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY TO CREATE TRUE QUALITY OF PLACE

- Expand the reach and impact of minority business development, diversity efforts
- Continue efforts to strengthen capacity and service delivery of the non-profit community
- Convene key organizational partners to address community quality of life issues
- Advocate for expanded cultural, arts, entertainment and recreational opportunities



## DRIVE PUBLIC POLICY AND BUSINESS ADVOCACY

- Remain the "voice of business" in the community through aggressive public policy advocacy at all levels of government
- Develop strategies to proactively solve issues that impede economic development
- Maintain focus on responsible public investment in transportation infrastructure



Building on the unprecedented success of the *Working As 1* strategic plan, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama is uniquely positioned to take its economic and community development impact to the "next level." Therefore, the *Next Level* strategic plan and capital campaign will encompass four primary areas of focus:

## LEAD WORKFORCE READINESS AND QUALITY EDUCATION

- Continue leadership and management of all Region 3 Workforce Development Council / *West Alabama Works* initiatives
- Convene workforce partners on industry-driven talent development
- Enhance business community engagement in pre-K-12 education curriculum



# Lead Workforce Readiness and Quality Education

## Mission

The Chamber will serve as the primary liaison between the business and education communities, ensuring that all levels of educational curriculum meet the existing and future workforce needs demanded by business and industry. Maintaining open dialogue between business leaders, education policy makers and school administrators will help drive curriculum which results in a college and career ready student population.

## Objectives

- Continue leadership and management of all Region 3 Workforce Development Council / West Alabama Works initiatives
- Convene workforce partners on industry-driven talent development
- Enhance business community engagement in Pre-K-12 education curriculum

*“With the Chamber as a West Alabama Works partner, leveraging their outreach and our dedication, the employers in our area can team together to solve the employment needs that we’re facing.”*

— Gary Nichols  
President and CEO  
McAbee Construction, Inc.



## Expected Outcomes

- Align workforce preparation systems and programs with employer needs through the continued expansion and development of West Alabama Works programming—*underway and ongoing*
- Expand regional coordination role and collaboration through continued employer engagement, career pathway alignment and sector partnerships through West Alabama Works to meet high-priority workforce needs—*underway and ongoing*
- Increase focus on AMSTI and STEM curriculum to improve math and science skills for students as well as implement new targeted and essential skills training in all Pre-K-12 public and private schools to prepare students for the workforce—*begin second quarter, 2018*
- Measure the increase in student engagement and the reduction in student dropout rates expected through the continued implementation and expansion of high school and college-linked learning pathways including dual enrollment and advanced placement courses and apprenticeships—*develop measurement system by third quarter, 2018*
  - Increase the number of the Chamber's Adopt-A-School program business participants by 5 business partners each year to increase our in classroom-level impact—*measure progress each year beginning in 2018*

- Continue to drive the universal accessibility of high-quality early childhood education, including First Class Pre-K and Head Start programming. Develop a scorecard assessment system to track improvement in reading ability, higher test scores, reduced dropout rates and to follow the success of students as they matriculate through our school systems—*develop measurement system in 2018 and implement system in 2019*



“Initiatives like Worlds of Work make us so proud to work with the Chamber because we know we’re making an impact on the future of the students as well as our community.”

— Peggy Sease  
Vice President, Human Resources  
DCH Health System



# Diversify Our Economy and Business Growth

## Mission

The Chamber will grow the region's tax base, create jobs and retain talented college graduates through the aggressive recruitment of knowledge-based corporate entities and a diverse mix of new-to-market retail brands. Working with its partners, the Chamber will expand the area's entrepreneurial ecosystem and foster a culture of innovation throughout the business community.

## Objectives

- Leverage The Edge entrepreneurial center to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, high-tech commercialization initiatives and small business development
- Partner with The University of Alabama and area leaders to recruit knowledge-based economic development and create technology villages in rural areas
- Promote smart growth principles in collaboration with local government officials
- Continue to expand the number of new commercial and retail entities

*“The University of Alabama is proud to be a partner with the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and to serve the citizens of our state. Over the next five to six years we will be adding more than 300 new faculty positions at the Capstone. The relationship we have with the Chamber is crucial to our success with this endeavor.”*

— Dr. Stuart Bell  
President  
The University of Alabama





## Expected Outcomes

- The Chamber and its partners will expand the outreach and capacity of The Edge through construction of a new facility to become a true “one-stop” business resource center offering incubation space, counseling and educational training for students, budding entrepreneurs and existing business owners—*construction in 2017, operational in 2018*
- Create organic growth of programming for The Edge leading to additional business startups and new jobs each year—*beginning in 2018*
- Advocate and help create policies that promote smart growth that leads to the creation of attractive mixed-use neighborhoods. Today’s young professionals are attracted to neighborhoods that offer a cohesive blend of nightlife, shopping, dining, affordable living, recreation, diversity, walkability and access to transportation options—*begin 2018 and ongoing*

- Recruit a diverse mix of new-to-the-market commercial entities to create jobs for college graduates, reduce the local unemployment rate, increase tax revenue and ensure a more stable economic base—*3 new commercial entities each year beginning in 2018*
- Recruit new-to-market retail businesses to significantly increase local sales tax revenue and help prevent the need for residents to shop outside of the community—*15 new retail entities each year beginning in 2018*

“The relationship between the City and the Chamber is invaluable because the level of the resources and the service leveraged from the Chamber is something that can't be matched at City Hall by traditional staffing. By merging our resources, we get a much larger benefit for the community as a whole.”

— Brendan Moore  
Executive Director, Office of Urban Development  
City of Tuscaloosa



# Engage the Community to Create True Quality of Place

## Mission

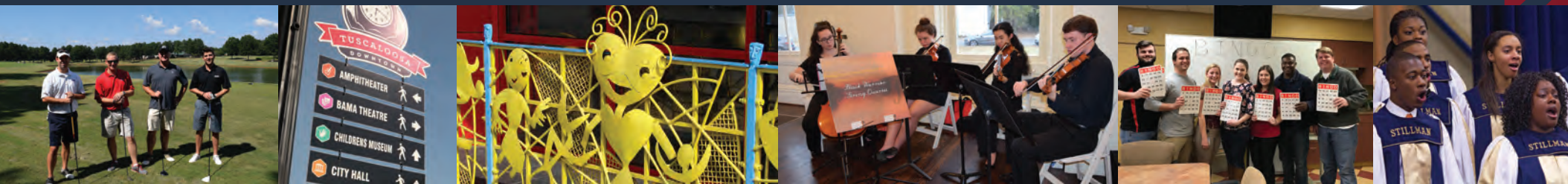
The Chamber will engage a broad coalition of public and private sector partners to promote minority business development, address socioeconomic challenges through a strengthened non-profit sector and make the community more attractive to young professionals, potential employees and current residents by creating and enhancing cultural amenities.

## Objectives

- Expand the reach and impact of our community minority business development efforts and diversity initiatives
- Continue to strengthen capacity and service delivery of the non-profit community
- Convene key organizational partners to identify, prioritize and address community quality of life issues
- Continue to enhance leadership development programs to create a pipeline for public, private and non-profit sector leadership opportunities
- Advocate for expanded cultural, arts, entertainment and recreational opportunities

*“How well we preserve our natural resources makes a difference in attracting new businesses and industry. I'm proud to be an elected official and public servant, and I'm proud to be a partner with the Chamber.”*

— Council President Jay Logan  
City of Northport  
Director of Community Outreach  
Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority

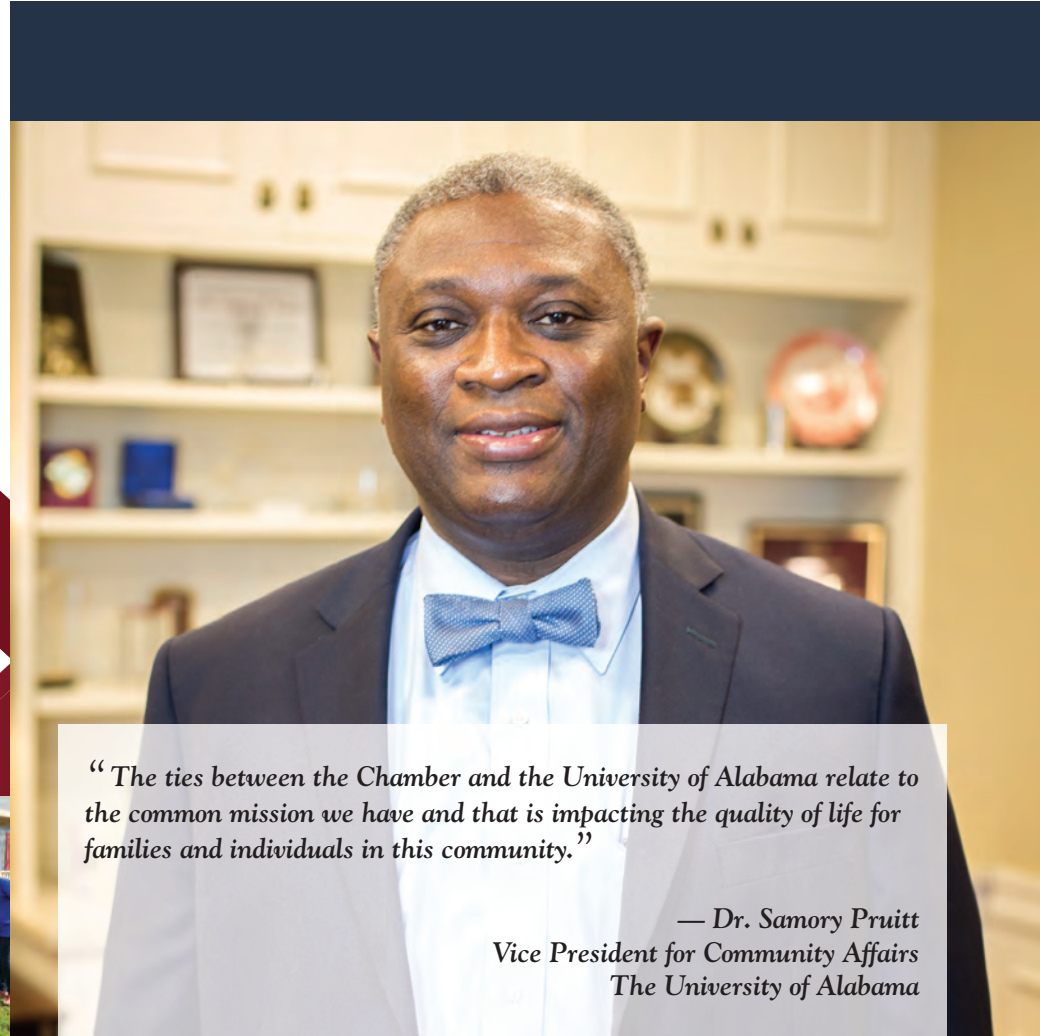
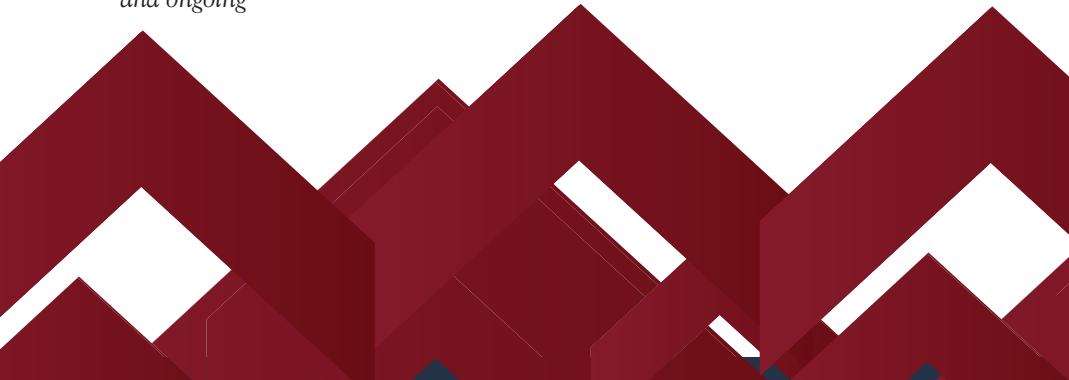




## Expected Outcomes

- Enhance and expand the programming and promotion of the Minority Business Council as the primary avenue for professional development, networking and recognition opportunities for minority-owned business enterprises—*underway and ongoing*
- Provide business development assistance to existing minority-owned enterprises, promote entrepreneurship within local minority communities and publicly recognize successful minority business owners—*assist 25 enterprises each year beginning in 2018*
- Continue its role as the flagship entity for leadership development, creating a consistent pool of well-informed citizens to fill critical leadership roles in the community—*underway and ongoing*
- Drive the process to create a professionally-managed, engaged and publicly-supported non-profit sector to dramatically affect the area's quality of life by addressing the pressing socioeconomic challenges in the community—*underway and ongoing*

- Play a lead role to expand high-quality cultural, arts, entertainment and recreational opportunities to make our community even more attractive to both potential and current residents—*underway and ongoing*



*“The ties between the Chamber and the University of Alabama relate to the common mission we have and that is impacting the quality of life for families and individuals in this community.”*

*— Dr. Samory Pruitt  
Vice President for Community Affairs  
The University of Alabama*



# Drive Public Policy and Business Advocacy

## Mission

The Chamber will continue to serve as the leading public policy advocate for the business community, championing pro-business legislation, economic development and responsible infrastructure investment at all levels of government.

## Objectives

- Solidify our position as the “voice of business” in the community through continued, aggressive public policy advocacy at all levels of government
- Develop strategies to proactively solve issues that impede economic development
- Maintain focus on responsible public investment in transportation infrastructure

*“During my time as Mayor, I have found the Chamber to not only be a business advocate, but an advocate for this community. Whether it's been education or transportation, the Chamber's been a partner with the City to make sure we enhance our quality of life.”*

— Mayor Walt Maddox  
City of Tuscaloosa





## Expected Outcomes

- Maintain existing strong working relationships with local, state and federal officials to ensure that the public policy interests of the area's business community are being effectively addressed—*underway and ongoing*
- Create an annual Public Policy Agenda and hand-deliver to officials in Montgomery and Washington D.C.—*underway and ongoing*
- Develop and publish an annual public policy scorecard, promoting accountability and responsible governance from elected officials at all levels of government—*beginning in 2018*
- Pursue pro-business policies and procedures, as well as aggressively resist those that are harmful to the business community, at all levels of government—*underway and ongoing*
- Create a more business-friendly environment to help existing businesses to grow and thrive and to significantly improve conditions for future economic development—*underway and ongoing*

- Uphold our reputation as the leading advocate for responsible public investment in transportation projects that enhance public safety, support economic development and enhance the quality of life for residents—*underway and ongoing*



“The Chamber’s role in the passage of HB600 results in the immediate as well as longer term impact of starting and funding infrastructure projects for our community using not only local dollars but leveraging available funding from state and federal sources.”

— Rep. Bill Poole  
Alabama House of Representatives  
Chair, Tuscaloosa County Legislative Delegation



# Campaign Goal

## How Your Investments Are Spent



Annual Budget

\$700,000

Five-Year Budget

\$3,500,000

## Annual Investment Levels

\$25,000+	Game Changer
\$15,000+	Chairman's Circle
\$10,000+	CEO Council
\$7,500+	President's Forum
\$5,000+	Investor Leader
\$2,500+	Growth Partner
\$1,500+	Community Colleague

## Initiatives:

- Economy and Business Growth Diversification
- Workforce Readiness and Quality Education
- Community Engagement and Quality of Place
- Public Policy and Advocacy



# Investor Benefits

## GAME CHANGER \$25,000+

- Membership on the Chairman's Council
- Table with prominent location and special recognition at Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Banner ad on home page of the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Seat at quarterly Chairman's Council Luncheons
- Unlimited access to the Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Prominent logo recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber
- 50% discount on all event and program sponsorships
- Other tailored benefits of specific interest to you will be developed as part of your ongoing "one-on-one" meetings with Chamber leadership

## CHAIRMAN'S CIRCLE \$15,000+

- Membership on the Chairman's Council
- Table with prominent location and special recognition at Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Banner ad on home page of the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Seat at quarterly Chairman's Council Luncheons
- Unlimited access to the Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Logo recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber
- 40% discount on all event and program sponsorships

## CEO COUNCIL \$10,000+

- Membership on the Chairman's Council
- Table and special recognition at Annual Meeting
- Four seats at the State of the Community
- Banner ad on home page of the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Seat at quarterly Chairman's Council Luncheons
- Unlimited access to the Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber
- 30% discount on all event and program sponsorships

## PRESIDENT'S FORUM \$7,500+

- Table and special recognition at Annual Meeting
- Four seats at the State of the Community
- Recognition on the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Unlimited access to the Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber
- 20% discount on all event and program sponsorships

## INVESTOR LEADER \$5,000+

- Four seats at the Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Recognition on the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Unlimited access to the Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber
- 10% discount on all event and program sponsorships

## GROWTH PARTNER \$2,500+

- Two seats at the Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Recognition on the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Unlimited access to The Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition on *Next Level* display at the Chamber

## COMMUNITY COLLEAGUE \$1,500+

- Two seats at the Annual Meeting
- Recognition on the Chamber's website
- Recognition in the quarterly *Rising Tide* business journal
- Seat at Annual Investor Luncheon
- Unlimited access to The Chamber's economic and workforce analysis system

# Our Leadership Team

## CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Mayor Donna Aaron, *City of Northport*  
 Dr. Cynthia Anthony, *Shelton State Community College*  
 Dr. Stuart Bell, *The University of Alabama*  
 Dan Blakley, *Regions Bank*  
 Norman Crow, *D. T. & Freight Company, Inc.*  
 Claude Edwards, *Bryant Bank*  
 Matt Feller, *Cintas*  
 Ashley Gill, *Chick-fil-A of Northport*  
 Jheovanny Gomez, *Jalapeno's Mexican Grill*  
 Heyward Gould, *FNB of Central Alabama*  
 Molly Ingram, *DCH Health System*  
 Carl Jamison, *JamisonMoneyFarmer PC*  
 James Leitner, *The Radiology Clinic*  
 Blake Madison, *Rosen Harwood, P.A.*  
 Mayor Walt Maddox, *City of Tuscaloosa*  
 Dean McClure, *TTL, Inc.*  
 Kim McMurray, *Ward Scott Architecture*  
 Gary Nichols, *McAbee Construction, Inc.*  
 David Pass, *Sealy Management Co., Inc.*  
 Rep. Bill Poole, *The Poole Law Firm*  
 Randy Skagen, *Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa*  
 Mark Sullivan, *The Bank of Tuscaloosa*  
 Terri Williams, *AT&T-Alabama*

## CHAMBER LEADERSHIP:

Dan Blakley, *2016 Chairman of the Board*  
 Dean McClure, *2017 Chairman of the Board*  
 Blake Madison, *2018 Chairman of the Board*  
 Jim Page, *Chamber President and CEO*

*"Through the implementation process of its Working As 1 plan over the past five years, the Chamber has made major strides in the Education and Workforce Readiness, Retail and Commercial Growth, Leadership and Community Engagement, Entrepreneurship and Innovation and Public Policy and Advocacy.*

*Building on that strong foundation, the Chamber is embarking on the next level of the journey to help make West Alabama all it should and must be.*

*We are unified as community leadership with a laser focus on implementing the goals of the Chamber's program of work. We are confident you will join us by investing your time, talent and dollar resources in this community-wide effort. Together, we will fuel the specific objectives and expected outcomes of this **Next Level** new five-year initiative and help ensure the continued success of our Chamber in fulfilling its role of improving the economic future and quality of life in all our West Alabama communities."*



From L to R: Dean McClure, Dan Blakley, Blake Madison, Jim Page





# Board of Directors

**Dr. Stuart Bell**, *The University of Alabama*

**Dan Blakley**, *Regions Bank*

**Bobby Bragg**, *JamisonMoneyFarmer PC*

**Cynthia Burton**, *Community Service Programs of West AL*

**Thomas Dedrick**, *Raymond James*

**Mike Ellis**, *Ellis Architects, Inc.*

**David Gay**, *Tuscaloosa Veterans Administration*

**Ashley Gill**, *Chick-fil-A of Northport*

**Chris Gunter**, *Sentell Engineering, Inc.*

**Angela Hamiter**, *JamisonMoneyFarmer PC*

**Tim Harrison**, *J.T. Harrison Construction Co., Inc.*

**Lee Henderson**, *Renasant Bank*

**Jason Hoff**, *Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc.*

**Cal Holt**, *Knight Sign Industries, Inc.*

**Jonathan Hood**, *FNB of Central Alabama*

**Molly Ingram**, *DCH Health System*

**James Leitner**, *The Radiology Clinic*

**Blake Madison**, *Rosen Harwood, P.A.*

**Dean McClure**, *TTL, Inc.*

**Kim McMurray**, *Ward Scott Architecture*

**Wilson Moore**, *Pritchett-Moore, Inc.*

**Dr. Jacqueline Morgan**, *The University of Alabama*

**Gary Nichols**, *McAbee Construction, Inc.*

**Jim Page**, *Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama*

**Tim Parker, III**, *Parker Towing Company, Inc.*

**David Pass**, *Sealy Management Co., Inc.*

**Gary Phillips**, *Premier Service Co., Inc.*

**Jordan Plaster**, *Merrill Lynch*

**Hunter Plott**, *John Plott Co., Inc.*

**Dr. Samory Pruitt**, *The University of Alabama*

**Mike Reilly**, *Randall-Reilly, LLC*

**Steven Rumsey**, *Rumsey Properties*

**Randy Skagen**, *Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa, Inc.*

**Curtis Travis**, *T & T Fine Homes*

**Jason Walker**, *Walker Associates, Inc.*

**Terri Williams**, *AT&T-Alabama*

**Bill Wright**, *Royal Fine Cleaners*

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF

**Jim Page**, *President and Chief Executive Officer*

**Donny Jones**, *Chief Operating Officer; Executive Director, West Alabama Works*

**Al Spencer**, *Vice President, Economic Development and Public Policy*

**Shanna Ullmann**, *Vice President, Community Engagement*

**Kimberly Adams**, *Director of Membership and Investor Relations*

**Tracy Crumpton**, *Director of Finance and Operations*

**Julie Hindall**, *Project Manager, Workforce Development*

**LoWanda James**, *Director of Information Services*

**Robin Jenkins**, *Director of Education Programs*

**Amy Materson**, *Director of Communications and Marketing*

**Jill McDonald**, *Executive Assistant*

**Carolyn Tubbs**, *Program Manager, Education and Community Engagement*



2201 Jack Warner Parkway  
P.O. Box 020410  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35402  
(205) 758-7588  
[www.tuscaloosachamber.com](http://www.tuscaloosachamber.com)