

**REMARKS OF THOMAS W. ROSS  
PRESIDENT-ELECT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**August 26, 2010**

Thank you. Let me also thank Susan, my soulmate and wife of 38 years, for supporting me in this decision and for being here with me today.

It is an honor to stand before you as President-Elect of the University of North Carolina – the oldest, and I believe the best – public university in America. I thank you for this opportunity and pledge to give it my all.

The four individuals who have led the University since its consolidation have provided wise and thoughtful leadership and have guided the University to where it is today, one of, if not the premier state universities in America. To be mentioned, as I now will be, in the same breath as Bill Friday, Dick Spangler, Molly Broad, and Erskine Bowles is humbling to say the least. To be asked to follow in their footsteps is daunting and, frankly scary. So, before I begin, I offer my thanks to each of them for the remarkable job each did in leading this wonderful institution. I particularly want to recognize the amazing leadership of Erskine Bowles during some of the most difficult economic times our state and nation have ever faced. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for his outstanding service. Thank you Erskine!

To accept this job will require that I leave a job and place I love dearly. Davidson College is one of the top liberal arts colleges in this country, and it is also my alma mater and the place that nurtured me and helped me grow as a student and, again, as its President. It has been an emotional struggle for me to come to the decision to leave, but I do so feeling called to this position and to this University. As you know, I also hold a law degree from UNC-Chapel Hill and have served on boards at several other UNC campuses.

I love this State of ours, and there is no institution more important to North Carolina and her future than the University of North Carolina. I care deeply about higher education and the difference it makes in enriching the lives of individuals and strengthening our civil society. I have witnessed its transforming power first-hand. Virtually my entire professional career has been spent in various forms of public service, and I am honored and humbled to be asked to serve as the next leader of the University. I am energized and excited at the prospect of working

in partnership with this board, with all 17 of our wonderful chancellors and their Boards of Trustees, to give back to this State and to do all I can to make life better for every North Carolinian. It is this call I accept.

The world we face today and the one we will face tomorrow are much different than the world in which we lived just a few short years ago. We all hear the descriptors – the new normal; a new paradigm; a different world order. Only time will tell if those words accurately describe our future. What we do know is that the world is changing, and that it will continue to change. We must not forget that it is also true that our state and nation, though being tested in new ways, remain strong and free, in large part because past generations have believed in and invested in the education of our citizenry. Knowing this, it is our duty to continue to support public education at all levels so that our people will be equipped and prepared to solve the increasingly complex problems we face. The University cannot do it alone, of course. We must look for new ways to work with K-12 educators and with our wonderful network of community colleges so that North Carolinians will have greater access to affordable and top-quality higher educational opportunities.

We must work together to help our students grow intellectually and personally; to experience fully the life of the mind; to develop critical thinking, writing and oral communication skills; to be able to analyze information, assess its credibility and use it to solve difficult problems; to be adaptable; and to prepare for work in new and evolving occupations. These are big challenges, but I am confident that UNC faculty and staff, working collaboratively across campuses, disciplines, and sectors, can meet the needs of our students. It is our duty to provide them with the support and resources they need. I am here today because I want to do all I can to assist and encourage the 47,000 individuals who work each and every day to serve the 225,000 students enrolled on UNC's 17 campuses. Nothing is more important to North Carolina's future, and we have no greater responsibility than to develop the curiosity, the creativity, the innovative spirit, the maturity and the intellectual capacity of these young people.

We must also find more direct ways for the University to help North Carolina communities and our economy. Things are tough right now. We know that. Our economy continues to move through transition and change. I believe the University can and must reach out to offer new ideas and hands on assistance that can encourage and bolster economic growth and enhance community well-being in our rural areas, our urban areas, and everywhere in between.

## Exhibit A

High quality, significant research is taking place every day on the campuses of the University of North Carolina. It is important that this work continue and that we do all we can to support it, particularly where faculty discoveries and findings can be applied in ways that create jobs, improve the quality of the life for our citizens, and strengthen the economy of the state.

I grew up in this State and I have served this state in a number of different capacities. It is my hope that these experiences will serve me well as I tackle the assignment ahead. My work with the courts and with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation have taught me much about this state, her history and culture, and her people. I have seen their strengths, their dire needs, their aspirations, their attitudes, and their determination. My work at Davidson has helped me understand better than ever how education can and does unleash the full potential of individuals and how education allows them to make a real difference in their own lives and in the lives of others.

So, I am excited to have the opportunity to once again serve the people of this great state. I thank each of you for the support and confidence you have shown in me today through your actions. I am far from perfect and I am no miracle worker, but I am committed to the tasks ahead and I commit to you that I will work as hard and as smartly as I am able to accomplish what is best for the University of North Carolina and the people of North Carolina. I very much look forward to working with each of you; with the chancellors, the Boards of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and administration at each campus; with our Governor, legislators and other policy makers and with many more of our citizens to make the University of North Carolina all it can be, and must be.

Thank you!