



**President Margaret Spellings' Remarks to the Board of Governors
July 27, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's my pleasure to welcome you – officially – to the role during this first full Board meeting.

Here to celebrate this day is your wife Tammy. I'd like us all to take a moment to thank her for accommodating the many long nights and weekends that are ahead for Harry, not to mention the many days of service that have already been logged.

There are a few things everyone in this room knows about you that I think bear repeating out loud.

First, you care about this University and want to make it as strong, effective, and efficient as possible.

Second, there won't be a soul in this state who will ever accuse you of sleeping on the job. You bring an energy and a passion, and you rightly expect the same from all of us who serve in these times.

And third, nothing should ever happen simply because it's happened before. We are reexamining our assumptions, questioning the status quo, and ensuring that things are optimized for the decade ahead that is no doubt different than the past.

There's a line I've often heard you say: "It shouldn't be hard to do good." I agree. Making that true for every part of our institution is a worthy goal.

So Harry, congratulations again.

On a more somber note, this week saw the passing of a legend and the loss of a great friend. There is no doubt that President Emeritus C.D. Spangler, Jr. was a giant of this state.

His belief in education powered his actions. The first in his family to go to college, he worked steadfastly to extend that opportunity to others, whether that was helping leading Charlotte through school integration, chairing our state's public K-12 schools, giving generously to education – including the creation of 120 endowed professorships – or leading this University System as President during a critical time.

In many senses, we are where we are because of Dick. Because of his leadership.

It was 32 years ago that he assumed the role of President of the University of North Carolina. In his inaugural, he reflected on a moment with outgoing President Friday after he was selected.

"Dick, let me read what the constitution of our state says about our responsibilities" he recounted President Friday saying as he began to read Article IX, Section 9 of the state Constitution, which as you

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all know reads: "...the benefits of the University of North Carolina shall be extended to the people of the state free of expense, as far as practicable."

In his inaugural address, President Spangler mused about what it must have been like when President Frank Porter Graham read that same passage to a young Bill Friday. He recounted why the authors of our constitution knew access to education was vital to a democracy, and why they were "desirous, even anxious, to make the investment necessary to produce an educated populace."

And then he said this: "If I live long enough to know my successor, I shall pick up this booklet and read to him or her Article IX, section 9 of the North Carolina Constitution."

I know this Board has made clear that this University System still has that value in its DNA. We are a public university. We are the people's university. And we will maintain that identity through thick and thin.

A few years ago, five UNC System presidents gathered for an event at Carolina. I want to pause for a moment and let Dick speak in his own words about why he answered the call and served his state in this clip.

[Watch video.](#)

Dick truly was a man who heard the call and fulfilled his duties. He met the case as he would say.

Yesterday, Senators Tillis and Burr gave touching tributes to Dick on the floor of the U.S. Senate. They were entered into the congressional record, and we'll be posting those on the UNC System's site, for all who are interested.

My thoughts, and I know all of yours, are with his wife Meredith and his daughters Abigail and Anna – our dear friend and colleague. Please join me for a moment of silence as we think of President Spangler and his family.

Thank you.

While this is a time of reflection, it's also a time to draw inspiration from the examples of the past and to do our best to live up to the ideals this University stands for.

Our job is to put this University within reach for all who stand to benefit from a college education and a college degree. Doing so will demand an all hands on deck approach.

Briefly, I want to publicly note a few leaders here who are advancing work to do just that.

Under Chairman Smith's leadership, new special committees are forming to tackle key issues, including veterans and military affairs, historically minority serving institutions, and healthcare.

Chairman Smith charged these committees yesterday, and we look forward to August when they convene.

A few other things to note.

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Through the leadership of Governors Rucho and Allison, and in partnership with the community college system and President Hans, we're launching a financial aid study group next month.

Thanks to the bold vision of the legislature – and the dogged determination of this Board – our focus on affordability is taking a big step forward this fall as NC Promise and \$500 a semester tuition at ECSU, Western Carolina, and UNC Pembroke begins. Early returns on applications are positive, and we look forward to seeing updated enrollment numbers this fall.

In partnership with DPI, the community college system, NC's independent colleges and universities, and leaders from business, government, philanthropy, and the faith communities, the myFutureNC Commission will continue its work, proposing before year end, a statewide attainment goal. I want to thank Governor Nelson for her leadership on that Commission.

With the support of the Belk Endowment, the Student Success Innovation Lab will launch in earnest this fall, testing and proving the best methods for improving graduation rates across the System. With the Belk Endowment's support, we're also leading an overhaul of our math courses and math pathways.

And through the work of leaders across the state, including former CMS superintendent Ann Clark, UNC Wilmington Provost Marilyn Sheerer, and new Winston-Salem State University Provost Anthony Graham, our teacher prep advisory board will be moving forward the recommendations and findings from our spring study on how to strengthen our colleges of education.

All of these initiatives and all of our work are based on data. It's how we identify problems; it's how we approach solutions, and it's how we herald success.

I am grateful to be serving with a chairman who shares my love for actionable information. As the two of us wrote a few months ago in the News and Observer, "having the right data isn't optional, it's a necessity and we're dealing with the consequences of our information deficit every day."

I'm proud of our work to change that.

I'm proud of our data modernization effort to build the infrastructure and processes we need.

I'm grateful for the hard work that's gone into the operational dashboards discussed yesterday. They will provide our decision makers with a wealth of information on finances and student outcomes. It's data that will help our System's leaders head off problems before they arise and target efforts to make progress.

As the Board said yesterday, there is more data that we want to have. Some, like post-graduate student outcome data, isn't collected or able to be collected under current law, notably any data on students who leave their state after graduation or who enter federal jobs.

I have been working to support legislation that would change that, creating a national data system around student outcomes. I'm pleased that Senator Tillis signed onto that legislation this month, called the College Transparency Act. We now have twelve senators, six from both sides of the aisle, who are co-sponsors. It will be a game changer for higher education, and something I have advocated for since my days in the White House.

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Furthermore, in addition to the dashboards discussed yesterday, I'm also proud of our Strategic Plan's unique performance agreements – 17 strategies for 17 institutions as our chairman often says. Each of which has measurable goals and targets, outlining how each institution will do its part to create a University System that serves every aspiring student and citizen regardless of background, and that continues to foster the incredible research and innovation that's driving our state and nation forward.

We have the first round of data in hand around these performance agreement metrics, and though the performance agreement goals don't officially kick in until the fall, it's useful to look at some key items.

As a System, we have improved in seven of nine metrics, holding steady on low-income and rural access, but improving in those students' completion rates, in graduation rates, in reducing achievement gaps, in preparing graduates for critical workforce areas and in outside research funding.

Twelve institutions have made graduation rates a priority metric. Ten of those 12 have improved in the two years since our baseline, leading to an increase of more than four percent across the System in our average graduation rate since our 2015 baseline year.

Six institutions made research funding a priority metric. Five of those have seen improvement since our baseline, leading to an across the System jump of 8.5 percent.

Andrew can give more details on the full range of data. But in short, what it tells us is the roadmap this Board unanimously approved just a year and a half ago is working.

As President Spangler stepped down after 11 successful years at the helm, he told an interviewer that "the only way to measure a university is what its graduates do to make their communities better."

There's no single metric we have that can truly measure that. No single action we can take that can ensure our graduates do all they can to do just that.

But together, I believe we have laid out the roadmap and are doing the hard work to do what's needed to fulfill that ultimate metric of success: graduates who lift up this state.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my report.