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## Report of the Association of Student Governments

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It is great to see you all here and to have the chance to explore one of our incredible campuses. Here I am at my last meeting as the student member of the Board of Governors. After this month, I will have no campaigns left to run, no more reports to give, and if all goes according to plan, no more assignments to turn in. After six years and two degrees within the UNC System, I've taken some time to think about what this experience has truly meant for me.

To properly explain, I have to first thank Dr. David English and President Hans for recommending that I read the Biography of Bill Friday. Upon my return to Chapel Hill last fall, it was the first book I purchased before any of the required readings for my classes. Don't tell my professors that; they can still change their minds about letting me walk. Reading this book as a former trustee and now governor was nothing short of eye-opening. As President of the UNC System, Friday described this role as having given him "the best seat in the house." And the more I thought about that line, the more it stuck with me. Because it is true. From this seat, you can see everything.

You see the full scope of the system, the challenges we face, the opportunities ahead, and the weight of the decisions that come before this Board. You are asked to think not just about one campus, but about all seventeen; not just about today, but about the long-term future of higher education in this state. Friday understood that. He led in moments of challenge, in moments of tension, and in moments when it would have been easy to lose sight of the University's purpose. In fact, as I was reading through this book, my thoughts were first constantly in a state of awe at the legacy he crafted, though they quickly shifted to, "Jeez, this guy cannot catch a break." Peter, I'm serious. Blink twice if you need help.

What really struck me was a moment in which Friday was facing immense pressure from the federal government over the way they implemented academic programs. Throughout this back-and-forth Friday is quoted with saying, "I do not believe UNC should ever yield to the federal or state government on who will teach and what will be taught." Now, to me that doesn't mean we disregard our partners in government and outside stakeholders as well, nor does it mean we don't appreciate the support they provide our institutions. To me, what that means is that in an era of culture wars and polarization, we make every effort to stay focused on our mission and the people we serve above everything else. Though our challenges look different from what Friday encountered, they are no less numerous and complex, and it will take immense discipline and focus from all of us to face them.

Now, as I prepare to end this journey, I want to give thanks to President Hans, Chair Murphy, and the rest of the Board for welcoming me to the team when I was first brought on one year ago. I'd like to also thank the hard-working staff at the System Office, our partners such as our friends at PBS, and our faculty and staff representatives, who all work to make this ship run smoothly. I'd also like to thank all of the chancellors in this room who personally inspired me to pursue a career in higher education leadership. To Chancellor Rogers and Chancellor Roberts specifically, after both of my elections you each welcomed me into the role and took the time to understand my goals and offer some much-needed advice. Something I will never forget from both of these chancellors is that at some point they each asked me a simple question: "What would *you* do?" It was a comforting reminder that if what Bill Friday

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said was true, that the University of North Carolina is the beating heart of the state itself, then its students, faculty, and staff are the lifeblood that keeps us going. So, I encourage all of us who have the best seats in the house to not forget those at its foundation, and to seek them out, bring them into conversation, and truly understand our lived experiences. As for myself, I'm excited to share that this past January I began working full time with the Johns Hopkins University Institute of Education Policy and I will continue with them after graduation. At the Institute we are dedicated to achieving educational excellence for all of America's K-12 students. Luckily my role is remote, so I'll be hanging around in North Carolina for just a bit longer, so I hope to still run into some of you from time to time.

But enough about me, today I am also excited to introduce the Association of Student Governments president-elect and your next board member, Rushil Sachania. Now that I'm on my way out the door, I can wear my purple a bit more proudly and say that the East Carolina Pirates did what the Kansas City Chiefs and UConn Huskies couldn't, going back-to-back to back. That's right, the Pirates have now gone 3 years in a row sending a current or former ECU student to the Board of Governors. Rushil is a North Carolina native born in Chapel Hill and raised in Durham and Cary. Rushil has essentially served as my chief of staff both during my term as ASG president and while I was student body president at ECU.

He is one of the hardest workers I've ever met and gives 110% to student leadership. I won't steal his thunder as I know he'll have the chance to introduce himself in May, but you all got a good one and I hope you all will join me in congratulating him one more time.

One year ago, I first stood up here and promised to make my remarks snappy, but now as I wrap up my filibuster, I just want to say thank you. Through ASG and the Board of Governors, I have seen the immense beauty of our state, and once I make it to that show at the School of the Arts that I promised Presidents Trey Mazza and Kiley Mullins that I would attend, I will have officially been to all 17 campuses in our System. What a privilege it has been to serve in these roles and see the incredible work happening on the ground. But more than the scenic drives, the awards and plaques sitting under my bed, the degrees I have earned, and the titles I have collected, what I will remember most of all is the relationships I've formed with the remarkable people who have made me into a better leader, and a better person. That has been the greatest gift higher education has given me, and I will spend every day moving forward trying to give back. So, with that, Madam Chair, I will finally yield the floor.