

**Chair's Report
by W. Louis Bissette, Jr.
Board of Governors Meeting
May 24, 2018**

Chairman Bissette reflected on his service as chair and thoughts for the future of the University. The following are excerpts of his remarks.

"At the end of June, I will have served as your chairman for almost three years. It has been an eventual time for me and for this Board. It has also been a time of consistent progress; a time that we should feel good about as a Board and a time in which we have grown to meet our state's expanded expectations of our job and our duties.

We are a new Board for a new era. We knew we had to change from the Board we were a decade ago and we have done so. We installed a new president and have supported her through her first two years as CEO of the University of North Carolina System. She has exceeded expectations and quickly learned the complexities of our Board, our University System, and our State. Margaret Spellings is leading the UNC System to a new level of excellence and has gained widespread support throughout our University System, state, and nation.

Our system's transparency has reached a new level. We started livestreaming and archiving every Board meeting for the public to see; we began holding public comment sessions at every meeting, sessions to compliment the informal ones that have popped up from time-to-time with signs and megaphones; and we kept a busy schedule touring our institutions and affiliates, seeing the good work that is happening, and learning about how our policies affect it.

Together with President Spellings, we unanimously adopted a Five-Year Strategic Plan, *Higher Expectations*, a Plan that now has strong agreements outlining exactly how each institution will do their part and meet their own ambitious goals. We have put all that data up on dashboards which is updated each year to see how we are doing. I see this Plan as a major accomplishment. It is easy to write words on paper, but much harder to make those words meaningful, and to make them change the way people act. And, this Plan is doing just that. It is doing it in ways that I know this Board and this state care about getting more students into and through college with the skills they need but with less debt.

Affordability has been a major priority for so many of you and for me. These past two years, we've frozen tuition for students who stay on track; we kept tuition increases low; and this year, passed a zero tuition increase for in-state students. In just a few short months, NC Promise will be a reality and a major game changer for our University and for the state. That work is possible because this Board has made restoring trust and confidence in our University system priority number one. The legislature has acknowledged that by passing the strongest UNC System budget in a decade.

I've been in North Carolina for a long time and I know that this state values higher education. So when we show that we will be good stewards of tax payer dollars and that we will focus on making each dollar go further to provide a quality education, that means we receive the generous support we need to continue to be a world-class system of public higher education. We have shown that stewardship by hiring the best leaders to get the job done. During the past two and a half years, this Board has hired five chancellors with two more searches underway. We've eliminated reporting requirements and cut red tape while making sure oversight and accountability remain strong. We made good progress on revisiting our funding model, a difficult issue that cannot be resolved in a few months. Through consistently getting our stakeholders to come together, we can agree on a common ground and develop a model which will work for all of our diverse institutions and for our state.

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During my years in North Carolina, higher education has always been a part of my life and when I joined the Board of Governors, it was clear that the playbook of the past was not going to work any longer. The state needed a University system that was thinking smarter about how it can serve the state's future. The difficulty, of course, is how to achieve that change and meet our responsibilities to guide this University System while not going too far micromanaging our leaders, becoming a management entity instead of a policy and oversight entity. I consider it an honor to have led this Board as it navigated that dilemma and we have come out stronger because of our discussions and debates. Through these two and a half years as Board chairman, through all the policy discussions and debates, board tours, and board meetings, during that period of time we have served nearly 400,000 students, awarded more than 140,000 degrees, and welcomed 170,000 new students to our institutions.

So, I want to say 'thank you' for serving with me on this Board and serving those students and this state and I also want to say 'thank you' to the leaders of all our institutions who make it happen. It has been a pleasure to serve with you. I also want to thank our new officers for volunteering to lead this Board. I've worked closely with all of them and know they are dedicated to this System and its students. I leave them with three pieces of advice that I've always tried to keep in the forefront of my mind when dealing with the issues we face at the University – 1) I believe the UNC System is the finest System of public higher education in the United States because of the diversity and uniqueness of the missions of our individual institutions and the dedication of our leadership, faculty, and staff; 2) in our System, one size cannot fit all and we need to keep that in mind; and 3) remember that you are dealing with a System that is loved and revered by the people of North Carolina – it is our state's most important treasure and one that in some way has touched the lives of every North Carolinian.

So when striving to bring positive change to our University be certain to carefully consider all of the ramifications and possible unforeseeable consequences of your actions. The people of North Carolina will be watching as we work together to make the University of North Carolina even better. I know this System is in good hands and I look forward to seeing the progress it will continue to make in the years ahead.

Thank you."

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