



**Interim President Bill Roper
Board of Governors Remarks
April 17, 2020**

Greetings everyone.

I regret that we cannot be meeting face-to-face today, but I am grateful that all of us are well enough and able to convene virtually.

The Board has been helpfully encouraging the work of the UNC System, even in trying circumstances such as these. Thank you, Chair Ramsey for your leadership. And thank you, all of you Board members for demonstrating your commitment to guiding the UNC System through this crisis. Your thoughtful approach and your flexibility have been much appreciated.

My gratitude also extends to the faculty, staff, and students at every institution in our System. And also to the chancellors for their leadership at this time. They have all adapted to necessity with good spirit and resourcefulness.

As a System, we have shown resilience during this unprecedented time.

I really appreciate everyone's can-do spirit. Without this positive attitude, we would not have been able to accomplish all that we have in a few short weeks.

This spirit of cooperation continues to help us make critical and difficult decisions.

Given the uncertainties we are navigating, shortly after our March 20 Board meeting, I directed all of the universities and the UNC System Office to suspend hiring, promotions, and salary actions, except for those that are critical to the mission.

The chancellors have modified their operations accordingly and they are closely monitoring personnel decisions consistent with my direction. At the same time, they are taking necessary actions to ensure that they have faculty and appropriate support staff in place to teach in the fall and to keep our institutions operating and performing our missions.

We have also been actively engaged in contingency planning with the universities over the last several weeks. Our planning focuses on making sure that our universities can perform our essential functions of teaching, research, and service for the people of North Carolina no matter what set of circumstances we face. Our work is forward-looking and has included several pieces of guidance and direction to the universities regarding a number of matters, including: (a) suspension of non-essential hiring; (b) direction as to refunds of housing and dining fees to students; (c) direction to move summer classes online and plan for new student orientation; and (d) guidance concerning the payment of emergency grants to students, among other actions.

The actions we have taken so far and our contingency planning efforts are consistent with what other universities around the country are doing. To be clear, while we certainly must respond and adjust to the immediate impacts we are experiencing in our state and our institutions, we must also take



medium-term and long-term views. To that end, we are taking steps to ready our universities for a return to full operations, while also making plans to make sure they can operate under any set of circumstances.

We understand the important role we have as leaders in the state and we will continue to perform that role. Feedback so far is encouraging. Although many institutions around the country are worried about a potential decline in enrollment, we have every reason to be optimistic about our enrollment picture. Students here in North Carolina are eager to enroll in and attend our universities. We will be here to serve our students and our state, no matter the circumstances.

Last week, the Budget and Finance Committee took a fresh look at our biennial budget request to the General Assembly. Later this morning you will be considering their recommendation, which recognizes the unprecedented situation we are in because of COVID-19.

If you approve the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee, the budget request will hold our budget generally in line with 2018-19 levels and request only the most critical operating and infrastructure projects across our institutions.

Overall, this revised biennial budget, if you approve, will represent a \$185 million decrease in operating expenditures from our original budget request and will remove nearly all of the \$632 million of capital improvement projects previously approved by the Legislature.

All of these projects are of critical importance, and they will remain priorities. At the appropriate time and opportunity, we must revisit these delayed projects with a renewed sense of urgency.

We are thankful as always for the financial support the UNC System has received from the General Assembly and the State over the years, and if you approve, we will seek a special COVID-19 request of \$45 million in one-time relief to help partially offset the new expenses and lost revenue as a result of the pandemic.

These revised budget requests will impact our institutions, but we understand that North Carolina's near-term revenue will be lean, and we are adjusting accordingly.

A little more than two weeks ago, we announced our commitment to prorated reimbursements of payments for unused housing and dining services as a result of COVID-19. I am pleased to report that our institutions have already started dispatching these refunds to students. We anticipate that 80 percent of these refunds will be processed by the end of next week, well ahead of our end-of-April deadline we originally issued in our guidance.

We are also keeping our eyes on enrollment numbers. At this point, some institutions are seeing fluctuations, but overall the numbers are holding steady compared to last year. As the next weeks unfold, we will see a clearer picture emerge. We do anticipate a decline in the number of enrolled international students.



In the meantime, other University work continues.

- The UNC School of the Arts search committee has reviewed a strong pool of applicants and recently completed virtual campus visits. Board of Trustees Chair Ralph Womble and I will be visiting next week concerning their recommendation. We anticipate a nomination to the full Board in May.
- The ECU Chancellor Search is on pause. While our timeline has been delayed due to COVID-19 impacts, the goal remains to name new chancellor for the fall term.
- The Fayetteville State search committee convened in February and had planned constituent listening sessions. However, these meetings were delayed in light of COVID-19 guidance on large gatherings. Chair Stuart Augustine is working with System HR staff to revise the timeline so as to accomplish our goal of having a new chancellor in place for the fall 2020 term.

Today, another change of leadership unfolds closer to home. After this meeting, Adam Schmidt will step down as president of the UNC Association of Student Governments. I would like to commend him for his significant contributions to the leadership of the UNC System. His presence on this Board will be missed, and I wish him best of luck in his future endeavors.

I would also like to applaud the UNC ASG for its recent decision to redirect \$65,000 to student emergency funds at each of our institutions. This money was originally earmarked for ASG conferences and other activities that have since been cancelled or moved online as a result of COVID-19. Remarkably, a number of other donors have now matched these funds and gone beyond, bringing the grand total raised to over \$700,000.

Thanks to UNC ASG's strategic thinking and these generous gifts, these dollars will have an immediate impact on the lives of students who are struggling financially as a result of this crisis. I commend Adam and his fellow ASG members for their vision and generosity, which have rallied others to the cause. And I'm grateful to the donors for their support.

Looking forward, we will follow the advice of the nation's infectious disease experts and our own experts at UNC, about how and when we should begin to transition back to normal operations. And further, we are in frequent contact with Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of NC Department of Health and Human Services, and are coordinating our operations with Governor Cooper's executive orders.

When we begin that welcomed transition to more normal operations, we will not be at the end of our challenge. We will continue to deal with the financial impact of the crisis, and we will begin the hard work of compiling and studying lessons learned from this event, so that we are even better able to serve the people of North Carolina.

The UNC System has long been a leader in American higher education, and we are determined to lead the way in this challenging time.



In short, the can-do attitude that has been so vital to our efforts through March and April can't stop now. And I'm confident that it won't stop now.

Thank you very much. That concludes my remarks.

UNC System Office

On or before March 20, all institutions moved from in-person instruction to a system of alternative course delivery, where possible and practical. Each institution reduced the number of students on campus and in university housing, with exceptions granted to a limited number of situations where students establish significant need to remain in university housing. Institutions will continue to utilize teleworking arrangements for faculty and staff capable of remote work. Summer course delivery will remain online.

The Board of Governors selected 17 outstanding faculty members to receive the 2020 Awards for Excellence in Teaching. The Board also voted to honor two faculty members with the 2019 Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service. The recipients are Dr. Mark I. West from UNC Charlotte and Dr. Martin Posey from UNC Wilmington.

The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission selected 114 individuals for the 2020 class from nearly 200 applications. Fellows may attend any of the program's five partner institutions: UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, NC State University, Elon University, or Meredith College.

Appalachian State University

App State announced the creation of the Mountaineer Emergency Fund, which is designed to assist students through unforeseen financial emergencies that would prevent them from continuing their education.

Spring 2020 graduates will have the option to participate in a virtual commencement ceremony in May, or Fall 2020 Commencement in December.

East Carolina University

Faculty, staff, students, and alumni have found ways to help their communities. From making PPE and hand sanitizer to training health care workers, Pirates are helping in unique ways.

Despite the significant operational challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, ECU Physicians – the medical practice of ECU's Brody School of Medicine – is taking steps to increase access to health care for community members, including those who are not current patients or do not have health insurance.

ECU has made the difficult decision to move New Student Orientation to a virtual format.

All University-sponsored camps, clinics, activities, or programs are canceled until June 30, 2020. Programs sponsored by external vendors but hosted at ECU property are also canceled or rescheduled.

Elizabeth City State University

ECSU emergency management professor, Dr. Kevin Kupietz, has been deployed to aid victims and potential victims of the virus. Working with a national taskforce to provide aid, he has been deployed to Alabama and then to Georgia.

ECSU professor and dean of science, aviation, health, and technology Dr. Kuldeep Rawat brought his team together to design and create a prototype face shield according to industry specifications, and he hopes they can be used beyond the medical community to keep workers in the public safe.

Fayetteville State University

College of Education faculty and teacher candidates continue serving 11 elementary grade students enrolled in the COE Reading Clinic virtually by using ZOOM to share screens with reading students. FSU candidates are also tutoring their student clients virtually via ZOOM.

Campus Compact, a Boston-based non-profit organization, has named the 290 students who will make up their 2020-2021 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows. One of this year's fellows is Thomas Bass, an FSU senior pursuing a bachelor's degree in social work, who is blind. As part of his community service work, he successfully lobbied the Fayetteville City Council for more funding on behalf of the blind community.

N.C. A&T State University

Student Government Association President Allison Gilmore has been selected as a 2020-21 Fulbright U.S. Student Program grant finalist.

Political science student Brenda Caldwell has been named a 2020 finalist for the Truman Scholarship, a premier fellowship for those pursuing careers as public service leaders. She was invited to interview in the first panel of students in Washington, D.C., after a competitive campus selection process.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T is providing resources to promote the health and well-being of all North Carolinians. Extension is continuing to share research-based information to help people make decisions.

N.C. A&T is offering undergraduate and graduate students the option to choose a pass/fail evaluation for class performance rather than letter grades for the Spring 2020 semester in light of academic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Carolina Central University

In response to the coronavirus crisis, NCCU has established a student emergency relief fund to support the short-term financial needs of NCCU students who are facing extenuating circumstances related to housing, food and other vital resources.

Grading exceptions for Spring 2020 Semester are Pass/Fail Grading Option and Revised Academic Calendar/Withdrawals Dates Due to COVID-19. These options are in response to a mid-semester transition that is likely to have unanticipated adverse impacts on student performance in courses; these impacts stem from a variety of causes, some of which might not be related to instructional changes.

NC State University

NC State experts are sharing the best available information on food safety and risks are associated with eating takeout and going to the grocery store. Sharing this information is part of NC State's mission as a land-grant university.

NC State's Center for Additive Manufacturing and Logistics (CAMAL) is using 3D printers to create face shields. The lab is currently producing, on average, 200 face shields each day for health care workers at WakeMed. As of April 6, WakeMed had received approximately 525 face shields from NC State's 3D printing efforts.

NC State's Nonwovens Institute (NWI) is using its two research and training pilot production lines to produce face mask materials that will be used to protect medical workers on the front lines.

The College of Veterinary Medicine Hospital is providing curbside emergency service. Pet owners need to call ahead of time and expect to stay in the parking lot while staff gather information by phone before taking animals inside for evaluation.

As of April 7, support for the Student Emergency Fund has already provided important assistance for more than 1000 students — and counting, with 1,210 donors committing \$945,091 in support.

UNC Asheville

Isaiah Green, president of UNC Asheville's student body, has been elected to lead the UNC System-wide Association of Student Governments. A rising senior majoring in management, Green has been UNC Asheville's elected student leader and ex-officio voting member of UNC Asheville's Board of Trustees since the start of the school year.

In an effort that is at once high-tech and homemade, a loose-knit group of people in the Asheville community and at UNC Asheville are working as volunteers to fabricate and donate PPE (personal protective equipment) to health care providers in Asheville and beyond.

Jennifer Forsyth '90 leads a team of reporters, data analysts, news researchers, a videographer, a graphic designer and an engineer in her role as deputy chief of investigations at the *Wall Street Journal*. In 2019, the team won a Pulitzer Prize for the "Trump's Hush Money" series. Now they are turning their attention to coverage of COVID-19.

UNC-Chapel Hill

The Structural Genomics Consortium, UNC-Chapel Hill, and the Eshelman Institute for Innovation announced the launch of the Rapidly Emerging Antiviral Drug Development Initiative, a global organization aimed at discovering and developing drugs to put "on the shelf" for clinical trial testing in anticipation of future viral pandemics. READDI is modeled after DNDi, a proven model for non-profit drug research and development. In READDI, projects will adopt extreme open science methods — sharing

drug discovery progress in real time, so that all can benefit. The nonprofit aims to raise \$125 million to generate five new drugs with human safety and dosing data in five years.

To help COVID-19 frontline workers at UNC Health, Carolina's faculty and staff have contributed personal protection equipment and expertise in the form of 3D-printed shields designed by faculty and made by medical students. By April 2, UNC Health had collected more than 1 million items from the community and campus units.

With campus operations reduced for the rest of the semester, Carolina's schools and departments are getting creative to help future Tar Heels connect with the University. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions and other departments on campus have created digital experiences to interact with prospective and recently admitted students.

UNC Charlotte

As the novel coronavirus was first emerging in the United States, the UNC Charlotte School of Nursing began preparations to support its students in the event that COVID-19 came to North Carolina. With 112 students set to graduate in May, finding a way to help nurses-in-training meet requirements for clinical training hours was a priority for School of Nursing Director Dena Evans and her team.

Faculty members from three UNC Charlotte colleges are teaming up to use 3-D printers to produce protective shields designed to extend the life of the disposable face masks used by health care workers combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNC Greensboro

UNCG's own Grace Cindric, 2016 graduate of the UNCG School of Nursing, has become something of an online superhero—a symbol of strength in the face of COVID-19. In a widely-shared image, she sports sunglasses, mask, walkie-talkie, and an arm covered with tattoos, making her way with confidence as though in an epic movie battle scene. The image has become an inspiring meme.

To provide the UNCG community with an alternative way to view, hear, and experience the arts at UNCG, the College of Visual and Performing Arts and University Communications have compiled resources to access arts-related content that can be viewed or listened to online.

Several partners across Guilford County have worked together with UNCG during this COVID-19 crisis to create a list of food resources for Greater Greensboro and Greater High Point.

UNC Pembroke

UNCP Foundation was granted \$480,000 from the Golden LEAF Foundation to expand business services offered through the Thomas Entrepreneurship HUB. Executive Director Thomas Hall said the funds are a timely award that will provide support for fledgling businesses during unstable times.

Simone Spencer was elected as the 49th session senior vice president of the UNC Association of Student Governments. Spencer is a rising senior from Matthews, N.C., studying psychology.

UNC Wilmington

Juan Zuluaga '20, a senior biology major who has conducted undergraduate research under the guidance of Assistant Professor of Biology and Marine Biology Raymond Danner, has been selected to receive a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

In recognition of the unprecedented challenges students and faculty face in finishing the current semester, UNCW has announced a new policy allowing students in many courses to opt into Pass/Fail grading after the semester ends and grades are reported.

UNCW has made the difficult decision to suspend summer programs that were scheduled to begin in April and run through June 24, with the exception of athletic programs.

UNC School of the Arts

The first cohort of fellows in the Kenan Institute's Creative Catalyst Certificate program are winding down their work. The leadership development program provides comprehensive support to the next generation of arts leaders, especially in the Southeast. The certificate program consists of three linked courses designed for working professionals in the arts and creative sector—Artist as Leader, Artist as Innovator and Artist as Entrepreneur—beginning in September 2019 and running through May.

When alumnus Nathaniel Gearhart was growing up, he never envisioned that immersing himself inside his favorite fantasy worlds would be part of his everyday life. Now, as a Disney Imagineer, Gearhart uses objects to bring beloved stories like *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* from the screen to real life at locations such as Walt Disney World and Disneyland.

Western Carolina University

A Zoom livestream of WCU's students and faculty presenting William Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, April 17. The performance can be viewed on the School of Stage and Screen Facebook page and the main WCU Youtube channel. Further event details can be found at arts.wcu.edu/virtual.

Faculty, staff, and students in the College of Engineering and Technology are using 3D printers in the college's Rapid Center to develop visors for face shields for use by health care workers in their battle with the COVID-19 pandemic. The work is part of a nationwide initiative by Stratasys, manufacturer of several 3D printers used by WCU's Rapid Center. The company has issued a call to businesses, industries, and universities across the nation to use their 3D printing capacity to make the face shields.

As COVID-19 protocols began taking effect in the Asheville area, registered nurses in a primary care residency and fellows program at WCU made a quick shift to assist an at-risk population while still continuing their training. Kae Livsey, director of community relations and scholarship for WCU's School of Nursing, serves as director for the RNs in Primary Care program.

Winston-Salem State University

WSSU offers an emergency relief fund to students who are being economically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ram Relief Fund, created by WSSU leadership, is available to give students support that is not available through government programs and other traditional relief sources.

Freshman Lauren Bagby's educational TikTok video is bringing awareness to the importance of the 2020 census for minority populations. Bagby took home first place in the #MakeNCCount video competition, jointly sponsored by NC Campus Compact and NC Counts Coalition.

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

NCSSM has announced a donation of \$25,000 from Hexion to support the school's new campus in Morganton. Hexion sees a natural connection between its business and better access to advanced education in science, technology, engineering, and math for students attending NCSSM-Morganton.

Beginning with the 2020-21 academic year and a switch to academic semesters, Mini-Term will give way to a new experience called J-Term, or January Term.