



**Interim President Roper's May 2020 Board of Governors Meeting Remarks  
May 20, 2020**

Thank you, Chair Ramsey, and good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the entire UNC System team, I congratulate you, Chair Ramsey, Vice Chair Murphy, and Secretary Burris-Floyd, on your re-election as UNC Board of Governors officers.

We thank you for your service and leadership, and we are grateful to the entire Board for extending this period of stability. Now, more than ever, it is important that we stay focused on doing our work together for the people of North Carolina.

I would also like to recognize Chancellor Dubois. Today is his final meeting with the Board as chancellor. Phil, thank you for your many years of service to UNC Charlotte and to our System.

On April 30, the Niner community was certainly in our thoughts as we all paused to remember last year's tragic event and honor the many displays of heroism that saved lives.

When Dr. Sharon Gaber assumes her role as the new chancellor on July 1, she will find a university community that is resilient and committed to one another, to Charlotte, and to the state. We look forward to working with her.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of former Elizabeth City State University Chancellor Thomas E.H. Conway Jr., who passed away Friday evening. The UNC System remembers and honors the contributions he made to the university and to northeastern North Carolina through his years of service and leadership.

We also congratulate ECSU Chancellor Karrie Dixon, who just last week was one of thirty women appointed to the newly-formed federal Women in Aviation Advisory Board. This news reflects the extraordinary momentum ECSU is experiencing. Dr. Dixon's appointment speaks volumes about her leadership and the university's growing reputation as an innovator in aviation education.

I want personally to thank Professor David Green for the many contributions he has made as chair of the Faculty Assembly. Working with him has meant a great deal to me.

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As I turn to describe how the UNC System is meeting the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, I want to begin by calling out the tremendous work that the faculty and staff across all the institutions have done – with amazing dedication and can-do spirit – to move courses and instruction to online format. I want to give a particular shout out to the IT staff who facilitated the move to remote working conditions.

We owe all of them a huge debt of gratitude.

Since I reported to you at the April Board meeting, we have continued our contingency planning efforts – for the System as a whole and for each of the institutions as we prepare to welcome students back to campus in the fall.



Governors, please know that we understand that each of you is engaged in these same sorts of efforts as you work to reopen your businesses and return your lives to “normal,” as rapidly and as effectively as possible. You are deeply concerned with restoring operations while maintaining the health and safety of everyone involved.

I want you do know that we, throughout the UNC System, are all working flat out to achieve these same goals.

I know you are sick and tired of these Zoom meetings. I empathize. The leadership team and at the UNC System are spending many hours of our days on zoom. One of the side effects are the headaches they cause. Believe me ... I’ve suffered through some.

But the bigger problems related to the loss of in-person meetings relate to the inability to read faces or to understand feelings involved. We lose the capacity to have side conversations and interact personally.

I say all this to give you an impression of the challenges we face and all that we are doing to get the work of this UNC System done. Please don’t think that we are taking this situation lightly.

These days, the question I hear most frequently is, “What will be the UNC System’s mode of operations for the fall?”

We are optimistic, leaning in and expecting our students, faculty, and staff to return to classrooms, labs, and libraries this fall.

Crucially, our planning is focused on ensuring that appropriate safeguards for health and safety will be in place.

And we will be ready for any set of circumstances that may prevail. In that light, we are working through a series of possible scenarios for operations for the Fall 2020 term.

While we have been doing this important planning work, our faculty, students, and staff have been hard at work completing the semester, after transitioning quickly to online instruction several weeks ago.

It goes without saying that we have depended on the cooperation and insight of our chancellors throughout this work. Over the past several weeks we have been continually engaged with all of the UNC System institutions.

Through a full round of 17 lengthy virtual conferences, the senior leadership team and I were able meet with all of the chancellors and their teams to discuss their plans for what lies ahead. Then a second round of detailed video conference discussions focused specifically on the areas where institutions will most depend on the UNC System Office for guidance and support.



We have developed draft guidance in five critical workstreams:

- Academic & Student Affairs
- Health & Safety
- Workplace, Faculty, and Staff HR Issues and Policy
- Finance and Budget
- Communications

Currently, we are in the process of sharing and revising the strategies in concert with the chancellors and their teams.

Our goal is to have this work completed by the end of May for institutions to use as they undertake their detailed planning.

As we move ahead, we are closely following what other universities and university systems are doing and saying, and we are in continuous communication with the leaders of our state, including Dr. Mandy Cohen, the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

This very intensive preparation is critical. It will ensure that our education, research, and service can continue, undiminished.

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Of course a constant priority is dealing with revenue losses we now face as a result of COVID-19. Much of our discussion revolves around how we can continue to serving North Carolina while spending less.

Recent legislative action reflects the State's historic and ongoing investment in our mission, which serves residents in every corner of North Carolina.

The Legislature met three weeks ago and appropriated \$44.4 million to reimburse our institutions for the costs associated with our move to online education, increased sanitization, and other expenses related to our COVID response.

We appreciate the Legislature's steadfast support, which has provided funding of our non-recurring request.

In addition, a number of our policy requests were approved, including providing some limited liability protections for our institutions that have responded to the pandemic by creating PPE for first responders, local medical centers, and the military.

The Legislature returned on Monday for the short session. As you can imagine, the lean State revenue outlook will undoubtedly impact the UNC System. Thanks once again to the Board for your support of our revised budget request at our April meeting. We will need that strong support to continue as the Legislature puts together a budget of individual bills throughout the session.



As we work with the State's representatives and leaders, Pete Brunstetter is on point as the UNC System's Chief Operating Officer. He brings experience to this position, having served as long-time co-chair of the Senate Appropriations/Base Budget Committee, playing an important role helping North Carolina recover during the Great Recession.

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Later today, the Board will vote to approve how we allocate the State's COVID- relief emergency funds. In your deliberation, you will consider directing a portion of these funds to a digital learning accelerator package. This project is a vivid example of our forward-thinking approach to the challenges we face.

- The digital learning accelerator will support the development of digital course libraries for 10 high-demand courses and expand access to student success coaching and virtual tutoring for remote learners.
- This investment will also support several key building blocks necessary to enhance the quality of our online teaching, including faculty development, online proctoring, and virtual labs.

This work that Dr. Kimberly van Noort and Dr. Andrew Kelly and their teams at the System Office have put together reflects what we can accomplish when we collaborate *as* a System, even in the midst of a crisis.

The State's many investments in these efforts will help us leverage our System-wide expertise and creativity, so that students receive cutting-edge education, no matter where their classes meet in the fall.

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Before I conclude, I want to add this point – all the chancellors and their teams at our UNC System institutions have undertaken a tremendous amount of work with dedication and seriousness.

In all of our deliberations, no one has expressed exasperation or frustration. They have committed to these activities with unparalleled focus on those whom we are privileged to serve – the students, faculty, staff, families, communities and citizens of our great state.

The coming months will present many complex challenges. But, I am confident that—with our robust leadership, shared commitment, and strong fiscal discipline—the UNC System and this great State are both well-positioned to succeed and lead during these unprecedented circumstances.

Thank you all for your leadership and your help.



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### **UNC System Office**

On April 29, the UNC System released a statement announcing expectations to open campuses for the Fall 2020 semester and is working with chancellors to set a safe and healthy plan forward. Chancellors will have flexibility to determine what steps they need to take to protect students, faculty and staff, especially high-risk populations, both on campus and off. Above all, our steps forward will be contingent on what we discover through ongoing monitoring of infection rates and North Carolina's testing and treatment capacity. We will continue to follow the advice of the nation's infectious disease experts, our own experts at UNC Health, and remain in frequent contact with Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of NC Department of Health and Human Services.

We announced in early May that all 17 constituent institutions have signed a formal letter committing to System Math Pathways core recommendations. This unified action is a significant milestone in a System-wide effort to redesign general education math requirements so that students are able to align these courses with their long-term degree and career goals. Institutions have agreed to prioritize getting students to take their first math course within their first 30 hours of enrollment and to providing professional development for the faculty and advisors involved with these courses.

Thank you to all those involved in the search and hiring process that has led to naming the next leader for UNC Charlotte. Dr. Sharon Gaber will serve as the university's fifth chancellor and will succeed Philip L. Dubois, who will retire on June 30. She is the second woman to lead the institution, following in the footsteps of university founder and philanthropist Bonnie Cone.

We held a Virtual Town Hall in late April for UNC System employees. The Zoom webinar gathered more than 280 participants and included a presentation from Human Resources and an open Q&A session.

### **Appalachian State University**

At App State, community engagement remained a priority for students, faculty, and staff, amid COVID-19. A virtual tip jar was created in support of local service workers, and funds were raised on social media to support the area's Hunger and Health Coalition.

App State faculty, representing 17 disciplines, are conducting research to discover how COVID-19 is impacting the state's rural areas. The topics to be explored include economic effects, prediction of vulnerability and future hotspots, homelessness and substance use, and ways to support vulnerable community members living alone.

### **East Carolina University**

ECU celebrated the accomplishments of more than 5,000 graduates with its 111th spring commencement on May 8 by virtual ceremony. Interim Chancellor Ron Mitchelson conferred degrees for 3,860 undergraduates and 1,201 master's and doctoral degree recipients. The university also plans to invite the spring graduates back to campus in the fall for in-person events as COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines allow.



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Fundraising continues to help students affected by the coronavirus. More than \$163,000 has been donated to help students facing displacement, unemployment, and other financial challenges.

Dr. Drew Baker, clinical professor of pediatrics and division chief of general pediatrics in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, offered tips to local parents about ways to keep their kids happy and healthy as coronavirus continues to impact their community and the world. His advice ranged from addressing children's fears about getting sick to ensuring that kids get enough exercise while sheltering at home.

### **Elizabeth City State University**

The ECSU Vikings Food Pantry has donated 400 pounds of non-perishable food to the Food Bank of Albemarle. According to the Food Bank director, this donation equates to 333 meals for the region.

ECSU recently named former WNBA and Wolfpack player Tynesha Lewis as its next Head Women's Basketball Coach. Athletic Director George Bright announced the hire at a virtual press conference.

### **Fayetteville State University**

FSU's Broadwell College of Business and Economics was awarded a \$199,280 grant from the LEAF Foundation to establish an innovation and entrepreneurship hub. The hub will assist small and under-resourced businesses develop the skills to build viable, sustainable businesses. The hub will offer consulting services, conducted by graduate and undergraduate students under the direction of faculty.

In collaboration with Davidson County Community College, Fayetteville State University has been awarded a Realizing Transformation Award by Frontier Set - an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The awards support innovative approaches to improving student success.

### **N.C. A&T State University**

In honor of the spring 2020 graduates, the city of Greensboro and the Chamber of Commerce worked with businesses to host "Greensboro Goes Blue and Gold" during the weekend of May 9. The event included N.C. A&T State University and UNC Greensboro.

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.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive Kidney Disease at the National Institutes of Health awarded \$5.7 million to N.C. A&T State University and three North Carolina Diabetes Research Center consortium partners. The award will support shared technological infrastructure for advancing innovative diabetes research and fostering inter-institutional collaborations in North Carolina.

### **North Carolina Central University**



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NCCU received a \$330,000 grant from the Minority Serving Institutions STEM Research and Development Consortium to assist in developing new risk-assessment tools for the Department of Homeland Security. NCCU will develop new state-of-the-art forecasting and alerting capabilities to help U.S. Customs and Border Protection safeguard against entry by pests and diseases that could be detrimental to the nation's environment or economy.

The Health Equity, Environment and Population Health program has been established at NCCU's Julius L. Chambers Biomedical Biotechnology Research Institute. The new initiative provides epidemiology assistance and other critical services to several local health departments to assist in the battle against the coronavirus. Specifically, the program assists Cabarrus, Anson, and Rowan counties, where public health systems may lack funding and staff to adequately serve patients during the pandemic.

NCCU's School of Education has been awarded \$3.7 million by Central Carolina Regional Education Service Alliance to expand diversity among school administrators to bolster the university's efforts in producing a diverse pool of Master of School Administration graduates. The four-year grant will provide funding to the Central Carolina Principal Preparation Program and focus on developing diverse individuals as school principals to enrich learning in North Carolina's underserved communities.

### **NC State University**

NC State's Center for Additive Manufacturing and Logistics is using 3D printers to create transparent face shields for the WakeMed health care system. The center's staff are operating their six 3D printers around the clock to produce an average of 150 face shields each day for WakeMed health care workers. Each face shield can be used multiple times with the proper sanitation procedures.

The Science House, a statewide STEM education outreach effort housed within NC State's College of Sciences, has developed online learning resources for K-12 students receiving school instruction at home during the coronavirus pandemic. Science House's virtual learning portal, Science House Express, provides engaging online learning materials, do-at-home activities, and in-depth interviews with noted scientists.

NC State's Nonwovens Institute is using its pilot production facilities to produce materials that will be used to make surgical face masks for medical workers on the front lines of fighting COVID-19. N95 respirators and surgical masks generally consist of an outer protective layer and an inner filtration layer, both made from nonwoven materials. But in light of the current critical need for face masks in health care settings, the Nonwovens team created a new material that can perform both functions at once. The institute is working with industry partners who will use the material to make face masks. In addition, the institute donated almost 5,000 meters of the new material to the Fort Bragg U.S. Army base to be used in creating face masks for health care workers in Army medical centers. Soldiers at Fort Bragg will turn the 4,725 meters of donated material into about 100,000 face masks. The Nonwovens Institute intends to donate up to 1,000 meters of the material to Fort Bragg each week on an ongoing basis.

### **UNC Asheville**



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Volunteers from UNC Asheville and the community have been fabricating and donating personal protective equipment to health care providers. The equipment is in use on the pediatrics floor at Mission Hospital in Asheville, MAHEC and in Vidant Health Center. A team of UNC School of Medicine students whose clinical rotations in Asheville have been curtailed by the virus are contributing.

Isaiah Green, ASG president, was sworn into the Board of Governors as an ex-officio member in late April and will participate in a formal in-person swearing in ceremony in July, depending on COVID-19 health and safety measures. He will represent all UNC System students and will serve on the educational planning, policies, and programs committee and the committee on strategic initiatives.

UNC Asheville awarded five Selby and Richard McRae Scholarships to exceptional students from the incoming Class of 2024. Each student will receive \$50,000 over the course of their four years. An additional 39 Provost Scholarships have also been awarded, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 bringing the total scholarship support to nearly half a million dollars for first-year students.

### **UNC-Chapel Hill**

A clinical trial of the broad-spectrum antiviral drug Remdesivir on approximately 1,000 patients proved effective and should result in a new standard of care for COVID-19 patients. Remdesivir was developed through an academic-corporate partnership between Gilead Sciences and the Baric Lab at the Gillings School of Global Public Health. Ralph Baric, the William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of Epidemiology, called the results "a game-changer for the treatment of patients with COVID-19."

Faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill and NC State have teamed up to create personal protective equipment for health care workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. At UNC, makerspace staff, volunteers, and medical students have produced tens of thousands face shields made of PETG plastic, while a mechanical and aerospace engineering team at NC State is creating much-needed replacement lenses for powered respirators and intubation shields. The UNC/NC State Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering also created task forces of students, faculty, and designers to make about 1,000 masks for UNC Health pediatric patients. Students are prepared to make several thousand masks if needed.

### **UNC Charlotte**

Dr. Sharon Gaber was named chancellor-elect for UNC Charlotte on April 28. With a background in city and regional planning that precedes an accomplished higher education career, Gaber's experience and perspective align with UNC Charlotte's position as North Carolina's urban research university. Gaber became president at UToledo in 2015 after six years as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Arkansas. Gaber succeeds Philip L. Dubois, who has led UNC Charlotte since 2005 and is the UNC System's longest-serving chancellor. She expects to arrive in Charlotte later this summer.

UNC Charlotte observed the one-year anniversary of the campus shooting that claimed the lives of two students and injured four others. The event was marked by a wreath ceremony at the Kennedy Building, where the incident took place. More than 39,600 viewers watched the 30-minute program via live stream. The remembrance featured comments from Chancellor Philip L. Dubois, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Kevin Bailey, student leaders, and prominent alumni. The Niner Nation Remembrance





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Commission, formed by Dubois in May 2019, has recommended the creation of a significant, focal memorial and commemorative space on campus.

UNC Charlotte announced new leadership for three academic areas—business, engineering, and urban research and community engagement—pivotal to the university’s mission to serve the greater Charlotte region and beyond. Jennifer Troyer was named dean for the Belk College of Business, Robert Keynton was appointed dean of the William States Lee College of Engineering, and Byron White was named associate provost for the Office of Urban Research and Community Engagement.

### **UNC Greensboro**

Teachers and staff at Moss Street Partnership School have donated more than 230 iPads to students at the elementary school to help with online instruction. Teachers have continued to look for ways to keep learning engaging and are connecting with students on Zoom. The school also provides “weekend backpacks” with non-perishable food items for students facing food insecurity at home and is a food distribution site for Rockingham County, providing breakfast and lunch five days a week. MSPS is operated by UNC Greensboro in partnership with Rockingham County Schools.

Three UNCG students are fighting COVID-19 in New York. Scott Dollar and Ali Cosgrove, both second-year students in the nurse anesthesia program, are helping treat coronavirus patients at the Catholic Health COVID-19 Treatment Facility at St. Joseph Campus in a Buffalo, NY suburb. While their clinicals are on hold, both are spending a month there, working five 12-hour shifts a week. After work, they spend their time completing class assignments on line. Bevin Strickland, who is scheduled to earn her Doctor of Nursing Practice in August, will spend two months working at Mount Sinai Queens ER.

### **UNC Pembroke**

UNCP counseling program faculty and students have won awards at the NC Counseling Association’s annual conference. Graduate student Elzetter Norris has been awarded a National Board for Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship Program for Addictions Counselors of \$15,000. Seven UNCP graduate counseling students have been awarded \$10,000 in scholarships from the Governor’s Institute on Substance Abuse. In addition, UNCP counseling faculty members Drs. Jonathan Ricks and Jeffrey Warren were recognized for their contributions to the counseling profession.

UNCP has made two new senior-level appointments. Dr. Teagan Decker was named dean of the Esther G. Maynor Honors College and Steve Varley has been named vice chancellor for Advancement.

### **UNC Wilmington**

UNC Wilmington has named its new provost. Jamie Winebrake, currently a dean at the Rochester Institute of Technology, will start on July 1.

Alumnus John Royle and five friends are providing free ear guards to health care workers and law enforcement on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. The group is making ear guards to alleviate the pain caused by wearing surgical masks for an extended period of time. Royle, an exercise science



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major, got the idea from bruising on the faces of health care workers from protective surgical masks. The group used eight 3D printers to provide a total of 3,982 ear guards.

Summer enrollment at UNCW has grown, with more than 1,000 more students enrolled over last year.

### **UNC School of the Arts**

The School of Filmmaking has been recognized by *Variety* and *Backstage*, leading publications of the arts and entertainment industry. *Variety* ranked the school in its list of top 50 entertainment programs worldwide, and *Backstage* ranked UNCSA in the top eight film programs for aspiring cinematographers. The articles highlight three faculty members – Joy Goodwin, Thomas Ackerman, ASC and Scott Ressler.

Brett Sellitti, a graduating senior in the School of Design and Production, has won the highly competitive Richard Hay Undergraduate Scene Design Award from the United States Institute for Theater Technology. Sellitti is the fifth UNCSA student since 2009 to win the undergraduate scene design award from USITT, the nation's leading association of professionals and students in the backstage industry.

UNCSA has launched "UNCSA at Home," an online portal showcasing student and faculty performances past and present, to enjoy while we stay at home, and until we can be back together in person. "UNCSA at Home" features complete performances, videos created at home, slideshows, and more from each of the school's five conservatories – Dance, Design & Production, Drama, Filmmaking, and Music – all accessible on demand for free at [uncsa.edu/athome](https://uncsa.edu/athome).

### **Western Carolina University**

Faculty and students from the College of Engineering and Technology are using 3D printers to produce face shields for health professionals across the region. After a successful run by Patrick Gardner, director of WCU's Rapid Center, four engineering students checked out printers for use at their own homes, tripling the CET's capacity to build the visor portion of the face shields to more than 350 a week.

WCU faculty and students with ties to China located a surgical mask distributor in that Asian nation and secured a shipment of 6,000 surgical masks for use by front-line workers in WNC's smaller health care facilities. The faculty members paid for the masks, then launched a successful Go Fund Me effort that not only covered the cost of the first 6,000 masks, but also enabled the purchase of additional personal protection equipment for health care workers.

WCU's recently approved master's degree program in experiential and outdoor education has gained accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The program, which is designed for professionals and those seeking careers in positions such as environmental educators, camp directors, wilderness therapy instructors, park rangers, and outdoor adventure instructors, is scheduled to begin offering classes in the fall.

### **Winston-Salem State University**



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A newly released economic impact report shares that WSSU has a \$500 million impact on the Triad. The report, prepared by Professor of Accounting, Economics, and Finance Dr. Zagros Madjd-Sadjadi and his students included university spending and the financial impact of students and graduates.

Winston-Salem State University's online RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is now ranked the best in the nation. According to RegisteredNursing.org, WSSU's program has an innovative curriculum that is affordable and highly flexible for registered nurses who want to advance their education quickly.

Chancellor Elwood L. Robinson's radio show is back on a new platform with a new name: *Future Focus Now*. The webcast will air live on Tuesday evenings on WSNC 90.5 FM's Facebook page. In each episode, Robinson will discuss important issues with top thought leaders, researchers, artists, and personalities. Episodes have included Carl Armato, president and CEO of Novant Health, Mark Owens, president and CEO of Greater Winston-Salem Inc., and Stephen A. Smith, commentator on ESPN's *First Take*.

WSSU hosted a virtual celebration to honor the Class of 2020 graduates. The virtual celebration recognized individual achievements, and each student was announced by name. Participants were highlighted in a personalized graduate slide and a 10-12 second video. The virtual celebration did not replace the formal commencement ceremony, which will be held later in the academic year.

### **North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics**

NCSSM is converting all of its summer offerings, including Summer Accelerator residential summer camp experiences, to virtual offerings that will provide high-quality educational experiences for students.

Students, faculty, and staff helped the NC Student Academy of Science implement its contingency plan to convert the NCSAS State Competition a remote format. The competition involved students as young as 12 who had never used Zoom as well as 40 judges from 10 institutions. Keynote speaker Dr. Melanie Simpson, chair of NC State's Biochemistry Department, gave her presentation via Zoom as well.

A team of three NCSSM high school students won the top distinction in the college-level Consortium for Mathematics and Its Applications's worldwide Mathematical Contest in Modeling, the only team outside of China with a top-rated paper. To win, residential seniors Jason Li, Suraj Rao, and Melody Wen tackled a real-world problem related to changes in ocean temperatures. The team was able to calculate and predict migration changes of ocean-dwelling species and its impact on revenue to the fishing industry. The NCSSM team was the only high school team to earn the distinction of "Outstanding" and surpassed teams from Emory, NYU, Virginia Tech, USC, UCLA, and more. NCSSM was allowed to compete with undergraduates after their outstanding work in an earlier high school version of the competition.