

**Chair Ramsey's Report
September 16, 2021**

The University of North Carolina System will turn 50 years old in October. Since our consolidation in 1971, our 16 universities share a mission of education, research, and public service. Our institutions truly are stronger than one and we should all be grateful for the vision of the leaders who created the System. The taxpayers of North Carolina and legislators had great vision in the University and I don't think there is anyway to repay that debt or thank those people enough for continuing to support us. This University has made great strides, but we must focus on the work ahead. Big questions loom as we look ahead to the next 50 years – stewardship of resources, institutional growth, and declining population are all issues that we must address.

I am proud to report that this Board has made numerous policy achievements over the past year – the ongoing all funds budget initiative will provide a big picture of resources to make more accountability and transparency; engage trustees to be more involved in the process, which is one of the most important improvements our Board will ever oversee; we're keeping in-state tuition flat for a fifth, consecutive year; and we are studying ways to limit growth in the cost of attendance across the board. Our goals are always to find ways to be more efficient and deliver degrees and education to the young people of our state. I'd like to thank Governor Holmes and Ms. Haygood for leading this effort on the Committee on Budget and Finance because it is not an easy task that we have asked them to do.

We have had a good year in the legislature. Our budget requests are sensible and allow us to care for our existing infrastructure, support enrollment, give our faculty and staff pay raises, and provide affordable tuition for in-state students. As we heard President Hans say in his remarks earlier today – should this budget be passed – it will be the largest infrastructure infusion ever in the history of the University. There is still work to be done on Jones Street but is clear that our elected leaders believe that we are moving this University in the right direction. I thank each and everyone of our elected officials for their time and for their continuing support in our efforts.

I thank Governor Byers, the Committee on Public Affairs, and all the staff for their work in helping to get the University's budget across the finish line. The Board committees are doing excellent work in other areas too. I'd like to extend my gratitude to the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs and the Committee on University Personnel for their achievements this year. We have simplified student transfer pathways, improved relationships with community colleges, and taken steps to make sure our academics prepare graduates for the workforce. We are also analyzing our System's workforce and will continue finding ways to improve efficiency and job performance. The Committee on University Governance has done excellent work this year working with our campuses to appoint trustees that will be engaged and to promote and preserve free expression. That work will continue, and I thank Governor Powers for his leadership on this front. The Committee on Audit, Risk Management, and Compliance has worked hard to identify enterprise risks and approved System Office recommendations to address those issues. We've supported

campus law enforcement by approving recommendations to manage recruitment and vacancy rates. As part of our Strategic Initiatives, we've invested millions of dollars in campus mental health. The pandemic has presented many challenges. We've also launched an initiative to improve literacy education for future teachers. It is my hope that our schools of education will be a force in preparing K-12 students for success after high school.

This brings me to the topic that is never far from my mind – student demographics and the workforce. Recently, I read an analysis showing that our nation is headed toward a “Demographic Draught.” The numbers don't lie. Our nation faced a talent shortage even before the pandemic. COVID-19 only worsened an already existing problem. During other recessions people have rushed back to school for degrees or technical training but current national enrollment trends aren't following that pattern. We are one of the fortunate few [universities] to see enrollment growth and we are not seeing that across the nation. We are insulated somewhat due to the number of people moving to our state. This decline is no paradox. This is history catching up to us as evidence by factors such as Baby Boomers' retirement, the opioid epidemic and its effect on prime age workers, lower birth rates, and generational delays in family planning. Even influences like video games, inherited wealth, and shifting attitudes about the value of full-time work all play a part in this.

Overall, we are seeing a decline in young people and as that population declines, we can no longer allow the next generation to fill our classrooms. So how does the System support the state's economy and address the talent shortage over the next 50 years? We must adapt. We cannot believe that we can remain the same and still be relevant. We must find ways to work more closely with employers to meet their needs more quickly, provide training for mid-career workers, and appeal to adult learners who must balance family and jobs with higher education. Over the past year, we have heard presentations from experts and held discussions about how we can reach more nontraditional and adult students. Going forward, we must turn those discussions into action. This is a passion of mine. It's something I want every one of us to take seriously. It's something I know President Hans and his team are committed to addressing, and I'm grateful for his leadership and his team's vision as we move forward. Vice President Kelly and the Committee on Strategic Initiatives led by Governor Coward, has done a great job in this area.

It's up to us to make the best of the opportunity going forward and to make the next 50 years even better than the past 50. Let's continue to make our campuses, and our people individually remarkable and collectively extraordinary.

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