



## **UNC Board of Governors names ECSU professor winner of 2023 Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service**

NEWS RELEASE | Feb. 29, 2024

RALEIGH, N.C. — Kuldeep Rawat of Elizabeth City State University has been named a winner of the 2023 Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service.

The award honors faculty who exemplify the University of North Carolina System’s commitment to service and community engagement. Created in 2007 and renamed in 2013 to honor Gov. James E. Holshouser, Jr., the award was designed to “encourage, identify, recognize, and reward public service by employees of the University.” Rawat was named one of two Holshouser award recipients at the Feb. 29 meeting of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

Rawat began his tenure at ECSU as an assistant professor in the fall of 2004. He is now the Marion D. Thorpe endowed professor in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Engineering Technology. Rawat also serves as dean of ECSU’s School of Science, Aviation, Health and Technology, and as the director of the university’s flagship aviation science program.



During his 19-year tenure at Elizabeth City State, Rawat has led multiple initiatives that serve the university, the surrounding community and the state. These include his work on the NASA Aerospace Academy Program and on a Mobile STEM Lab program, reaching K-12 students from 21 county school districts in some of North Carolina’s most economically disadvantaged, underserved and rural regions.

By giving students hands-on experiences in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, Rawat has opened a world of opportunity for families from all backgrounds and walks of life. The NASA Aerospace Academy has impacted over 3,500 students, 100 K-12 teachers and 600 parents during the five-year project period. Notably, the Mobile STEM Lab has reached nearly 15,000 students, parents and teachers since 2017, and continues to be valuable in community outreach and relationship building. Rawat’s work has also focused on helping ECSU students graduate with STEM degrees and move into high-demand, high paying jobs by way of partnerships with Apple, Hewlett-Packard, NASA, NSF, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

“We are very proud of Dr. Rawat and his outstanding work to enrich the legacy of ECSU, and to build new bridges that reach communities in the surrounding region and across the state,” said ECSU Chancellor Karrie Dixon. “He is a shining example of ECSU’s public service mission, and we congratulate him on this well-deserved award.”

“Because of Dr. Rawat’s vision and hard work, students from the smallest towns in eastern North Carolina can discover new opportunities and build paths that will change the course of their lives for the better,” said UNC Board of Governors Chair Randy Ramsey. “We thank Dr. Rawat for his incredible contributions to generations of North Carolinians and congratulate him on this award.”

Rawat’s work combines teaching and public service to meet regional needs. As the architect of ECSU’s degree in unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), Rawat has led multiple projects that established the university as North Carolina’s hub for drone activities. Rawat has explored the use of drones in farming, land mapping, renewable energy infrastructure inspection and conservation efforts along North Carolina’s coast. He also helped to establish the only UAS training facility in North Carolina, which now supports drone application research and training for entrepreneurs, the farming community, energy companies, public safety and local and state agencies, among others.

In another effort to address local needs, Rawat applied for and won a federal grant to strengthen broadband access, workforce development and digital inclusion in rural and underserved communities. This was a major achievement given the region’s digital divide and its impacts on health, employment, wages, household income, population growth and other measures of economic vitality. Today, Rawat continues to help implement broadband across the region, supporting a future where families have access to education and opportunity by way of technology.

“When people ask me what makes North Carolina’s public universities special, I point to faculty like Dr. Rawat, who see the needs of their students and communities and respond by taking action,” said UNC System President Peter Hans. “Dr. Rawat is an outstanding faculty member who knows that teaching and public service go hand in hand, and that relationships and community — as much as education and research — are key to making the change we want to see in the world.”

## **UNC Board of Governors names UNC-Chapel Hill professor winner of 2023 Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service**

NEWS RELEASE | Feb. 29, 2024

RALEIGH, N.C. — Dean Emeritus Mike Smith of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has been named a winner of the James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service.

The award honors faculty who exemplify the UNC System’s commitment to service and community engagement. Created in 2007 and renamed in 2013 to honor Gov. James E. Holshouser, Jr., the award was designed to “encourage, identify, recognize, and reward public service by employees of the University.” Smith was named one of two Holshouser award recipients at the Feb. 29 meeting of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

As the former dean of the UNC School of Government, a professor of public law and government, and the former vice chancellor for public service and engagement, Smith has led UNC-Chapel Hill in service to North Carolina for 35 years. A dedicated researcher, dynamic teacher and thoughtful public servant, Smith joined UNC-CH as an assistant professor in 1978 and steadily rose through the ranks at the Institute of Government. Through his leadership, the institute became the School of Government in 2001, reflecting its expanded role on campus and across the state.

“By bringing together faculty and leaders from across our state, country and world, he has made significant advancement in our understanding of good governance and best practices at the state and local level,” said former UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz.

Smith is a longtime champion of nonpartisan public service, keeping the School of Government closely focused on its mission of improving state and local government for all North Carolinians. Today, the school is the largest university-based organization to offer local government training, advising and research in the United States. The school offers up to 200 courses, webinars and specialized conferences for more than 12,000 public officials each year, giving practical guidance to lawmakers and local officials in every part of North Carolina. Faculty members respond to thousands of calls and emails each year, acting as neutral advisers for local governing boards, legislative committees and statewide commissions.

“Mike is a model of selfless, nonpartisan public service,” said UNC System President Peter Hans. “He understands on a bone-deep level that this university belongs to all North Carolinians, and that we must use our research and scholarship to benefit our citizens. He has put this belief into practice over many decades at Carolina, and we are indebted to him for his support of good government in both large and small communities around the state. My congratulations to him on this well-deserved award.”



Under Smith's leadership, the school has expanded its expertise with programs in public technology, leadership and governance, environmental finance, development finance, data-driven policy analysis, criminal justice and more. In 2013, Smith helped pioneer a fully online degree, quadrupling the number of students served through the Master of Public Administration program and making it easier for public officials across the state to take the next step in their careers.

Smith was appointed vice chancellor for public service and engagement under former Chancellor James Moeser while continuing to serve as dean. As vice chancellor, he led the university's work with UNC Tomorrow, an initiative to make the UNC System more responsive to the needs of the state, and he negotiated a \$10 million investment by the Golden LEAF Foundation that funded collaborations between faculty and local communities. Smith has led several campus initiatives that strengthen connections with the state, including the Carolina Center for Public Service, the Thorp Faculty Engaged Scholars Program, the Carolina Engagement Council and the Tar Heel Bus Tour.

"We are grateful to Mike Smith for his unwavering support of state and community leaders and commend him for his work to promote ethical and accountable public service in North Carolina," said UNC Board of Governors Chair Randy Ramsey. "Our congratulations to him on this award."