



Margaret Spellings
Report to the Board of Governors
Fayetteville State University
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Thank you, Chairman Bissette. It's great to be here. I am thrilled to begin our work together, and I want to thank you for your guidance and sage counsel over these past several months.

I also want to thank Craig Souza and the members of the transition committee who have made my arrival welcoming and seamless.

I also extend my deepest gratitude to Junius Gonzales for his leadership as Interim President—I've been fortunate to benefit from his experience and skill, and I look forward to continuing our work together.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge Kevin FitzGerald, who is retiring as UNC Chief of Staff on April 1.

Kevin has spent his entire career in service to the citizens of this state, and I'm grateful that he delayed his retirement plans to help me transition into my new role. Kevin isn't able to be here today, but I know that you all join me in thanking him for his commitment to service and to education. (Kevin – I hope you are watching this on the live stream.)

I have had the privilege of spending the past three days here at Fayetteville State—I am now a proud member of the Bronco community, and I want to extend my deepest gratitude. "Proud to be" as we say here at FSU.

I thank Chancellor Anderson for his hospitality and leadership, and I look forward to working with this fine leader for many years.

The last time the Board visited FSU was in 2003—and we are so happy to be here with you today.

At our February retreat, five key priorities emerged to guide our work together: access, affordability, student success, economic impact, and excellence. From students to faculty to taxpayers to policymakers to members of this board, there's broad agreement around these areas and our commitment to move forward.

Today, I want to lay down some markers for how I will address these priorities in my first 100 days to better meet the needs of our changing student demographics and changing workforce demands.

First, I am going to do a lot of listening and learning.

It's unbelievable that I am on day four—rounding out my first week. I'm still learning the nuances of the system—and that's why I am going to spend much of the next few months talking with faculty, students, staff, and all stakeholders—and taking in the beauty of this great state.

I am engaging these core constituents in a conversation about what they are most proud of and where we have work to do.

In fact, on Wednesday, Chancellor Anderson and I learned about students' concerns with access to and affordability of college.

At the same time, I was able to see—first-hand—the power of community at Fayetteville. Faculty and staff are empowering students to be successful inside and outside the classroom through dynamic mentoring and tutoring programs. As one student told me, “I don’t feel like a number here.” It was a great day.

This brings me to my second point—getting to know and empowering the Chancellors. Time spent on campus is also allowing me the opportunity to get to know my colleagues. They are my partners and my collaborators, and I have the utmost confidence in them.

I will rely on them for insights into the unique strengths of the universities they lead. They have important roles to play, and I look forward to the Chancellors retreat I’m holding in April. I’m committed to supporting each of their campuses in an individualized way—so that the system as a whole can accomplish our goals.

Third, I intend to better align the talent on the General Administration team.

We need the right structure and the right people doing the right things.

We must break down silos and encourage collaboration, transparency, and effectiveness. Later this morning you will be hearing from the Boston Consulting Group on the status of their work to help the General Administration be as effective as possible.

And within the coming weeks they will present me with their final report.

After considering the report I plan to act quickly to institute the changes to be fully effective and accomplish our goals.

The resolutions that the Personnel and Tenure Committee approved yesterday, and that all of you will consider later in this meeting, are essential to this effort. Of course, I will be consulting with the Personnel and Tenure Committee as the resolution requires along the way and I appreciate your support.

Fourth, I will work with the legislature to advocate for the policies and resources that we need. I am hopeful that together we can achieve some early legislative wins, and performance-based pay is at the top of the list. In order to attract world-class talent to our institutions, we need to offer competitive compensation.

In addition, we want to tackle key strategic initiatives around accessibility and affordability, leading toward more timely completion using good data and analytic technologies. And, we must delay the implementation of NC Gap.

The report before you clearly shows that NC Gap has unintended consequences – not to mention that it limits consumer choice and empowerment.

We also want to lift the private fundraising cap to give individual institutions greater autonomy to maximize their partnerships with the private and philanthropic sectors.

Fifth, I want to ensure that I am using your expertise strategically.

You are a talented group of people, and I pledge to make significant changes in the way my team works with you.

Together we will conduct a comprehensive review of our policies and revise them to make the best use of your time and expertise.

We will do advanced planning to develop coherent agendas that address the most compelling and strategic issues facing the system.

We will ensure that the materials you receive in advance of our meetings are timely, user-friendly, relevant, and focused on these most compelling strategic issues.

And my final point is about transparency.

In my listening tour and in day-to-day operations, I want to plant the seeds for us to have strong and lasting partnerships with stakeholders from students and faculty, to legislators, to business, civil rights and faith leaders. All of them have valuable expertise to contribute, and I want to ensure that our conversations include them.

I'm eager to provide the opportunity for regular comment sessions for members of the University community and the public to present issues and share concerns at these meetings.

As Chairman Bissette mentioned, beginning today, we are streaming our meetings live on the UNC website. This will ensure that our meetings are accessible and open to members of the public who can't be here in person. Thanks to UNC-TV for helping make this happen.

We have also refreshed our system website to allow greater access to news and information about the University.

I'm looking forward to developing strong and productive relationships with all of our constituencies including you, and I greatly appreciate your support.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to work shoulder to shoulder together to make North Carolina the nation's leader in higher education. Thank you.