



President's Report

2017 January BOG Meeting

Good morning! I appreciate the depth you all brought to yesterday's discussion on tuition and fees, as well as the policy presentation with Jamie Merisotis and Dan Greenstein on the major issues facing higher education. Hopefully hearing about the national landscape from the Gates and Lumina Foundations set some context for the big goals in our strategic plan.

Our University and state lost one of its most remarkable and cherished citizens this week – Dr. Oliver Smithies. An integral part of the UNC community, Dr. Smithies was a distinguished faculty member of the UNC School of Medicine where he taught for nearly 30 years.

Known around the world for his work in gene targeting, Dr. Smithies was also the first full-time faculty member at UNC Chapel Hill to win a Nobel Prize award. His many contributions to the University and his legacy will certainly live on. Please continue to keep Dr. Smithies family in your thoughts and prayers.

As Jamie and Dan talked about yesterday—and many of you have echoed—our plan is a focused, disciplined roadmap for the UNC system. This is not a dense, prescriptive list of absolutely everything we care about. It's a concise framework that defines our core goals.

We arrived here through a genuinely collaborative process — from the leadership of this Board, to Chancellors' guidance and experience, to ideas raised by faculty, staff, and students through online feedback and in-person town halls.

You've also heard from some of the best minds in higher education, incorporating valuable lessons from reformers across the country. We've all agreed that this University can do more to improve the quality of life and broaden opportunity for all North Carolinians.

And we've agreed on the need to major in the majors — to address the big-picture issues that will define this University and our state in the years to come. We can't be all things to all people, but we can tackle our core mission with urgency and excellence. This plan does exactly that.

That's why I hope that later this morning, you'll cast a "yea" vote and be proud of it. You've all worked hard on this guiding document. And you've charged me and my staff with making these shared goals a reality. Your vote today is an expression of where we want to take this University, and a promise of accountability for getting us there.

And the approval of that plan will drive our budget and policy agenda for the legislative session. Scott Lampe will offer details in his Chairman's report on our priorities.

These provide investment in a new data system to improve our ability to make well-informed decisions about how we target resources and achieve our goals. Right now, we have a lot of information, but our ability to mine it lags where we need it to be. Harmonizing the different systems built over many years will help us connect policies and spending to measurable outcomes.

We're also asking to launch of a competitive grant to scale promising ideas for improving student success throughout the system. And we're putting forward a comprehensive regulatory reform agenda to keep us focused on core, high-value activities that empower our campus leaders and improve student outcomes.

I think we have a great story to tell in Raleigh, and I'll be calling upon many of you for help and guidance as we tell that story over the next few months.

As you heard yesterday in the Committee on Budget and Finance, the Elizabeth City State Working Group has issued its final report and recommendations.

I want to thank Chancellor Conway and his team, Board of Governors liaisons Harry Smith and Steve Long, and our staff from General Administration for the time and care they've put into this effort.

Elizabeth City has the chance to stake out a new strategic role within our state and the University system. The NC Promise initiative, which will dramatically lower the cost to students while maintaining the value of an ECSU education, makes it abundantly clear that Elizabeth City is a vital part of our state's effort to offer an affordable, high-quality education to all.

Lawmakers have committed significant resources to that promise, and our working group has identified ways to build on that momentum.

We can begin by strengthening key academic programs like Teacher Education and Aviation Sciences, rebuilding campus facilities and infrastructure to make ECSU a more inviting and competitive prospect for students, and restructuring all of ECSU's outstanding debt — or as Harry likes to say, 'their capital stack' — to free up investment capital and make the campus more financially sustainable.

In my opinion, this working group — a joint effort of the campus leadership, General Administration, and the Board of Governors — has been a model for how we can leverage our expertise to solve the most pressing issues facing the University. Their clear-eyed report is a real service to this institution, and I thank them for it.

The North Carolina Central University Chancellor Search Committee has been established and will have their initial meeting next week on January 17. The committee will be chaired under the leadership of George Hamilton, who also serves as chair of the NC Central University Board of Trustees.

Ms. Joan MacNeill will serve in a non-voting capacity on the search committee. I look forward to meeting the committee next week and providing them with some instructions and guidance on what we will be looking for in a successor to Chancellor Debra Saunders-White. We hope to have a new chancellor in place by August 1, 2017.

Lastly, I am pleased to inform you that we have hired Matthew Eisley as our new Vice President of Communications, succeeding Joni Worthington, who retired at the end of the year. Matthew will join us from Smith Anderson law firm in Raleigh where he served as Manager of Strategic Communication.

Prior to joining the private sector, Matthew enjoyed a 20-year career in journalism, mostly at the News & Observer, where he was a reporter, an editor, and a columnist. He is here with us today, getting a sense of what lies ahead for him, (signal to him) and he'll begin work on Monday, February 22.

Going forward, the communications office will report to the President's Office, through chief of staff Meredith Beaton Didier. Please join me in welcoming Matthew.

Mr. Chairman, I know we have a lot of business to address and some important votes to take. So let me just emphasize my thanks for the work of this Board on our strategic plan, and say how much I'm looking forward to making this shared vision a reality. I appreciate your confidence in all of us here at General Administration.