

**UNC System President Peter Hans**  
**Remarks at the groundbreaking of East Carolina University's Center for Medical Education Building**  
**November 21, 2024**

Thank you, Chancellor Rogers, and thank you to everyone here to celebrate the start of a new era for the Brody School of Medicine.

When we tapped him for the role, I told the Chancellor that there was work to be done by investing in East Carolina University's health care mission, and it has been such a privilege to work alongside this extraordinary leader.

Chancellor, Dr. Waldrum, the trustees and faculty and students and supporters of this great school — you are doing God's work, and I'm here to testify to it.

There's never been a more productive era for East Carolina's health care mission than what we've witnessed over these last few years, with the formation of ECU Health and as we break ground today not just on a new building but on a new era.

We have come a very long way since the 1960s, when the creation of the East Carolina School of Medicine was met with all kinds of hesitation and hostility.

Everyone from lawmakers to accrediting agencies had concerns about whether a medical school in Greenville could thrive, whether it could meet North Carolina's profound need for rural health care, and whether we could all get along well enough to make it work.

As it turned out, the answer to whether North Carolina ought to grow its medical school in Chapel Hill or build a new one in Greenville was yes — we needed both, and that's never been clearer than it is today.

The names we remember from that contentious earlier era are not the small-minded squabblers worried about protecting their piece of the pie.

We remember the far-sighted visionaries who saw a growing, changing state and forged ahead in a spirit of cooperation and shared commitment.

In 1961, when the idea for ECU's School of Medicine was just beginning to gain steam, Governor Terry Sanford said the real enemies of health and prosperity in Eastern North Carolina were defeatism and complacency.

Defeatism because it assumed our problems were too deep and too tough to solve.

And complacency because it made even good-hearted people believe we'd already done plenty, that a little bit of progress is good enough.

We're all standing here today because of people who knew that a little bit of progress on behalf of our citizens is not good enough.

We're here today because of people who knew that there's no such thing as "good enough" when you're talking about the health and care of all North Carolinians.

We're here today to inherit that restless ambition on behalf of the people of this state, to channel it into a new era of growth and investment for our public universities and their health care mission.

Over half a century, we have seen the impact of this place.

We have seen this school deliver time and again on its founding promise of educating world-class physicians who are ready and eager to serve the people of this state and especially this region.

We have seen this university earn national acclaim without ever losing sight of its reason for being, continuing to inspire and educate the health care professionals we need in the small towns and rural communities that give our state its character and deserve our best care.

Proverbs 29:18 reads "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

As long as we continue to work together, the people won't perish; they will flourish.

That is my goal for ECU.

That is my goal for the Brody School of Medicine.

That is my goal for ECU Health.

Don't ever give in to defeatism and complacency.

Say yes to progress and investment.

Shake the hand that is reaching for yours in shared commitment to serving this region.

Trust your hopes and not your fears.



Today we will till the soil, water the seeds we've planted in recent years, and if we hold true with an open and honest heart, they will bear abundant fruit.

May God bless this work and the good people of Eastern North Carolina.