

**UNC System President Peter Hans**  
**Remarks to the UNC Board of Governors**  
**October 17, 2024**

Time and again, when our campuses and our communities are in need, we see the men and women who work at our public universities showing up to serve students, to keep vital operations running, to do their jobs even when their own lives are being upended. On Monday I had the chance to visit the mountains and personally thank many of our colleagues.

It has been an amazing example of public service in Western North Carolina over these past few weeks. Staff at Appalachian State, UNC Asheville, and Western Carolina worked around the clock on storm response, keeping students safe and fed and fully supported. The team at the North Carolina Arboretum is working hard to restore the beautiful landscape there after five to ten thousand trees fell on the property. Staff at School of Science and Math in Morganton worked to restore basic services at that young campus. Our chancellors demonstrated steadiness and resolve.

Many of the folks who normally go without much recognition led the way. The landscaping crew clearing debris even during the storm, the dining team who kept preparing meals, the emergency management officers, the facilities management team, student affairs supporting students, and everyone who made sure that we had no loss of life amongst our faculty, staff, and students. And they even made sure our universities provided whatever support and resources they could to the wider community, fulfilling our role of serving North Carolina no matter what the need or even the ability to communicate with the wider world for days.

At four UNC Health Care hospitals across the region, many doctors, nurses, and staff worked for days on end without going home, to keep emergency services operating at a time of critical need. They've once again demonstrated professionalism and extraordinary devotion in serving patients and being a place of healing refuge for those who are hurting.

I also want to thank our students, who not only took care of each other but also stepped up to volunteer and serve those in the surrounding communities. The patience, camaraderie, and goodwill we've witnessed are exactly what you'd hope for in a rising generation.

In so many cases, our faculty, staff, and medical professionals have shown up to work even as their own homes and neighborhoods suffered devastation from the storm. I don't have words to convey the full measure of admiration and gratitude I feel for our colleagues, or the full measure of my sympathy for the hardship so many are going through right now.

And a particular thank you to our law enforcement officers. They kept campuses and the people on them safe. On Monday I met a UNCA officer that you'll hear more about next month. He helped save multiple lives in the Garren Creek community while losing 11 members of his



extended family to the flood. Over lunch, after saying that his parents survived, he told me he was blessed. May all our faith be as strong as his.

People share what they have, pitch in where they can, and find a deep sense of purpose in caring for those around them. There are still many hard days to come, and we will weather them together. But for now, I simply want to honor the tough and inspiring public servants who are the heart of this university. Thank you and know that we stand with you.