

UNC System President Peter Hans
Remarks to the UNC Board of Governors
November 16, 2023

It's been a great few days here in Greensboro. My thanks to Chancellor Gilliam and his team for being excellent hosts, not just for our Board but also for the trustees who traveled from all over the state to be with us this week. Try as we might, we are not low-key houseguests, and I appreciate all of the effort that goes into welcoming this group to campus. That's especially true in the middle of a busy fall semester.

UNC Greensboro is especially good at rolling out the welcome mat to higher education. Half the undergraduates on this campus are the first in their families to attend college, and they're here because they know UNCG will deliver on the fundamental promise of higher education. Students pursue a college degree because they're looking for a life-changing opportunity — for an affordable education that's going to deliver better career prospects, deeper social connections, and the capacity to handle life's challenges with confidence.

Just about any way you can measure, UNC Greensboro is meeting that mission. In terms of social mobility, helping vault low-income students into better jobs and careers, UNCG ranks among the best performers in the state. The same is true when it comes to welcoming a truly diverse student body and helping support them to graduation. And this university makes all of that happen with low cost and low student debt.

When we look to the future of higher education, it's going to look a lot like what's happening here in Greensboro. A university with a broad mandate to provide affordable opportunity, finding ways to adapt to a state that is growing more diverse, an economy that's growing more complex and dynamic, and a population of adult learners that is demanding more flexible options. Universities often get dinged for being slow to change, slow to embrace innovation. But when you look at what Chancellor Gilliam and his team have been doing here at UNCG, you see the very best of public education's ability to meet changing public needs.

UNCG is graduating students into critical workforce fields like nursing and education; offering high-value online programs in everything from public health to business analytics; and welcoming a growing population of transfer students as well as Latin American students. These are all critical priorities for serving a state like North Carolina, where our economy has huge needs for talent and our traditional pipeline of high school graduates is expected to get smaller over time. Adapting to those long-range trends is the great work of higher education right now, and I'm proud of the pragmatic spirit that is helping UNCG answer the call.

There's often an assumption that delivering a strong return on investment to our students will mean moving away from our traditional mission, from the depth and breadth of a university



education. But what we see in the data shared this week — and in the experience of institutions like UNC Greensboro — is that a broad, rigorous education is every bit as valuable as it has ever been.

The things we do best in higher education — exposing students to a wide array of ideas and expertise; challenging them to think critically about the world; and then people the skills to listen and relate to one another on a deep level — those are only getting more crucial as technology accelerates, as careers change, as our state welcomes more people from all over the country and all over the world. It's a joy to see that age-old mission come alive in new and exciting ways here in Greensboro, just as it does every day across our System.

I believe in the “G” – go Spartans!