

UNC System President Peter Hans
Remarks to the UNC Board of Governors
October 19, 2023

I would like to take just a few minutes to celebrate the remarkable level of public investment in the budget passed by state lawmakers last month. It wasn't quite ready when we were last together but now you can see many green check marks on the board's legislative priorities and UNC System initiatives.

Now that list is long. The faculty retirement incentive, the performance-weighted enrollment change, cybersecurity, distinguished professorships, faculty recruitment and retention, support for athletic departments, and numerous campus specific-requests vetted by the Board are just a few of the highlights.

Chair Ramsey and I spoke at length in May about our efforts to pair ECU Health and UNC Health in a focused collaboration to improve rural care in North Carolina. Four hundred and twenty million dollars will be invested in that project. Additionally, and relatedly, the legislature set aside \$320 million for a new children's hospital with an emphasis on behavioral health, along with funds for rural residencies, nursing salaries, and healthcare workforce program expansions. So, much more to follow on this front soon.

The budget will allow our campuses to continue a golden era of campus modernization and renovation that we started two years ago. As you can see from our history of capital funding, we've seen a massive infusion of state funding to take care of our aging facilities. This building boom, totaling billions of dollars, will also contribute to the state's economy for years to come.

And finally, our faculty and staff will receive healthy salary increases - 7 percent over two years. Cumulatively, UNC System employees' paychecks are nearly 14 percent higher than they were in 2021. Faculty and staff work hard to serve our students and our mission, and we need to compensate them, particularly given inflationary pressures.

You'll notice a trend in both of those charts. State funding picked up considerably at the beginning of the decade when the Board and the System aligned their goals and objectives. I'll leave it to you to determine if that good fortune is a timing coincidence or not.

But we've talked a lot about falling confidence in higher education nationwide, and the long-term trend of other states reducing support that has led to so many public institutions elsewhere to raise tuition and place more of the burden on students and families.

It gives me so much pride as a North Carolinian to tell you that the compact around public higher education is alive and well in this state. We've kept costs in check and tuition low; in



return, our lawmakers have made generational investments. The result is one of the strongest, most affordable university systems in the country.

The compact worked because of earned trust. This Board has proven its ability to focus on our core mission — on delivering the bread and butter of a high-quality education at a price North Carolina’s families can afford. And together, we continue the patient work of creating a more effective model of higher education.

Amid all the noise and churn, we’ve stayed focused on the things that matter for the people of North Carolina, and our state leaders have noticed. We should honor that trust by holding the line on costs, by continuing to invest in access, quality, and economic impact, and by continuing to serve students of all beliefs and backgrounds.

Thank you all for your part in this success. I’m genuinely excited about the work ahead.