



Faculty Governance

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Gregory Starrett
President of the Faculty

23 February 2015

Mr. John Fennebresque, Chair
Dr. Joan Templeton Perry, Secretary
UNC Board of Governors

Dear Mr. Fennebresque, Dr. Perry, and Members of the UNC Board of Governors,

At its 19 February meeting the UNC Charlotte Faculty Council unanimously endorsed the *Resolution Regarding the Transition in Leadership and Direction of the UNC System*, attached here.

As you know, according to statute, the Board of Governors' right to oversee the affairs of the University system, including selecting its leadership, comes with

the responsibility of serving the best interests of the whole State. In electing members [to the Board], the objective shall be to obtain the services of the citizens of the State who are qualified by training and experience to administer the affairs of The University of North Carolina. Members shall be selected based upon their ability to further the educational mission of The University through their knowledge and understanding of the educational needs and desires of all the State's citizens, and their economic, geographic, political, racial, gender, and ethnic diversity. ([NCGS 116-7\(a\)](#))

Faculty on our campus and across the UNC system believe that in making the decision to end the tenure of President Tom Ross, the Board has failed to exercise its authority responsibly. The Board has outlined no new vision for higher education in the state, and has thus failed to establish that President Ross would have been unwilling or unable to pursue that vision. The Board has avoided articulating the qualities it wishes to see in a new President, failing thus to establish that President Ross lacks those qualities. This lack of transparency creates problems that affect the ability of our universities to serve the citizens of the state and ultimately to help our students succeed.

Academic planning

Without knowing the Board's rationale for this transition or its vision for the future, faculty and administrators cannot intelligently advance our teaching and research missions. Mr. Ross is the individual who initiated the most recent system-level strategic plan. Since he is being replaced without explanation, we have no way to know whether that strategic plan is still in force. This means that faculty and administrative leaders at the campus level cannot rationally plan new curricula and programs or effectively attract, hire, and retain the best teachers and researchers to help our state and, most importantly, to help our students build for the future.

Accountability

As public servants appointed by the State Legislature, members of the Board are accountable to the citizens of North Carolina, including to the hundreds of thousands of students, alumni, faculty, and employees of the university system. The university system's students and the other citizens of North Carolina deserve a detailed and credible explanation of the Board's decision to remove Mr. Ross, and an immediate articulation of its plans for the future.

Collegiality

This lack of transparency contravenes the spirit of core principles of the university system as outlined both in the Code and in the current strategic planning document, [Our Time, Our Future](#), which commits the university system to "nurture and protect the . . . culture of inquiry [and]. . . the free exchange of ideas" (p. 11). According to its own statement on [Leadership and Policy](#), "UNC operates under an arrangement of shared governance that leverages the collective strengths of its campus chancellors and administrators, local boards of trustees, and the UNC President and Board of Governors. The University also honors the important traditional role of the faculty in the governance of the academy." We currently have no evidence that the Board consulted with its chancellors, its campus trustees, or with the faculty before making the decision for leadership transition.

In unanimously endorsing the Faculty Assembly's Resolution, the Faculty Council of UNC Charlotte calls again on the Board of Governors to provide a detailed and cogent explanation to the student population, the public, the faculty and administrators of the UNC system, and stake holders from the state business community of their sudden decision to replace a leader who, [in their own words](#), "has served with distinction, [whose] performance has been exemplary, and [who] has devoted his full energy, intellect and passion to fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of his office."

Respectfully submitted for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Faculty Council,

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Resolution Regarding the Transition in Leadership and Direction of the UNC System

Whereas:

Chairman John Fennebresque of the UNC System Board of Governors (BOG) in his press conference on 16th of January, 2015 suggested the need for a “transition in leadership” of the UNC system to move the University in new directions; and

Whereas:

The stated need for transition required the precipitous decision to replace Tom Ross as President of the University of North Carolina System; and

Whereas:

The UNC Faculty Assembly has observed President Tom Ross to exhibit exemplary, visionary and inclusive leadership of the UNC System; and,

Whereas:

President Tom Ross continues to lead the UNC System in the best interests of the University and all the people of the State of North Carolina, in a manner that:

- Ensures access to the University system to all qualified students; and
- Provides higher education to North Carolina’s citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, in a manner that is “as free as practicable,” by developing and protecting financial aid and tuition structures; and
- Attracts and retains the best faculty and staff for all UNC campuses; and
- Builds a strong leadership team at the UNC General Administration that works effectively with the BOG to develop and support the capacity of individual campuses to fulfill their missions in the context of the system; and
- Effectively manages the system’s complex budget during a period of drastically decreasing budgets; and
- Strengthens campus leadership by selecting Chancellors committed to academic excellence and the respective missions of the system’s diverse campuses; and
- Promotes a comprehensive liberal arts based education that prepares students for careers and lifelong learning; and

Whereas:

The UNC Faculty Assembly is deeply concerned that the precipitous decision to replace an acknowledged highly effective system leader will diminish the opportunities to attract and retain strong, effective and visionary leaders at all levels of the University system;

Therefore Be It Resolved:

That the Faculty Assembly of the University of North Carolina expresses its most sincere thanks and highest respect for the exemplary work and leadership of President Tom Ross; and,

Be It Further Resolved:

That the UNC Faculty Assembly strongly endorses the manner in which President Tom Ross continues to lead the University of North Carolina System; and

Be It Further Resolved:

That the UNC Faculty Assembly calls upon the Board of Governors to articulate the rationale for their stated need for a “transition in leadership,” a transition that implies a change in direction that has neither been discussed nor vetted with campus leadership, faculty, or the people of North Carolina.