



## A Message from the **PRESIDENT**

### **Dear General Administration Colleagues:**

On my first day as president of the UNC system, I am writing to introduce myself and let you know how much I am looking forward to working with you. In particular, I want to thank Junius Gonzales for the stellar job that he has done in leading this system and helping me transition into my new role. I also want to emphasize the deep respect that I have for my predecessor, Tom Ross, who has been unfailingly generous with his support and his wisdom.

As someone who has spent much of my career in public service, I can tell you that many of the smartest, hardest-working, and most thoughtful and capable people I know are those I have collaborated with in the public sector—and especially in the field of education. I know that you, and others like you, could have chosen many other lines of work. The students and families and citizens of North Carolina are lucky that you suit up every day to make this system and its campuses and institutions all that they can be.

I was drawn to North Carolina because of the visionary leadership this state has shown in higher education since the nation's first public university opened its doors here in 1795. The individuals who founded this institution and cultivated its growth over the centuries understood that education is the foundation of the American dream. Higher education strengthens democratic values, fosters civic engagement, and levels the playing field so that people from all walks of life can reach their own highest potential and serve the greater good.

Our shared charge is to build on this legacy by ensuring that North Carolina leads the nation in securing an affordable, high-quality education for all qualified students. Historically, our country has done a fine job of educating elites, and it still does. The scholarship and innovation coming from our universities has lifted the quality of life for people the world over. We can and should sustain that quest for excellence. But in today's world, education is the new civil right. Our public universities have an economic and a civic imperative to help many more people—particularly people of color and those from first-generation and low-income families—achieve at much higher levels.

Achieving this goal begins with ensuring that our campuses are welcoming and safe places for students and faculty of all races, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities to live and learn and work alongside one another. Our institutions thrive because of our commitment to academic freedom and unfettered inquiry, and we have a responsibility to provide students with diverse perspectives, academic programs, and campus opportunities that will inform their own values and perspectives as they prepare to lead in our interconnected, global society. Equal access and opportunity to a university education are fundamental values of the University of North Carolina, and as president, I will be committed to ensuring that we recognize, respect, and serve *all* students, faculty, and staff. I look forward to partnering with you to uphold and enhance our commitment to equal access, diversity, inclusion, and opportunity for all.

We want our universities to lead the nation in access, quality, and affordability. We must ensure that we are transparent about whom we are serving well and where we have room to improve, and I will advocate for the policies and the resources that we need to be the undisputed best. In the coming weeks, I will be visiting every campus in the UNC system to listen and learn from students, faculty, staff, policymakers, and other stakeholders. I am also eager to hear what makes you proud, what challenges are most important to you, and where you believe we have work to do—and I look forward to beginning that conversation at this morning's Town Hall meeting.

Sincerely,



Margaret Spellings  
President  
University of North Carolina

