

March 13, 2023

Dear faculty and staff,

As you know, significant change is needed at UNCG. This email is long, but I am committed to keeping you informed and getting your input. Please take the time to read through this.

As many of you know, the UNC System recently instituted a new funding model, which provides different amounts of funding for different academic programs and, in particular, provides significantly less funding for graduate programs. Also, demographic shifts, including the simple fact that over the coming years fewer students will be attending and graduating from high school in the state of North Carolina, have resulted in lower enrollment throughout the UNC System. Because of this, we need to undertake a review of our academic portfolio (i.e., what programs and degrees we offer). If we delay, changes of this kind will likely be imposed upon us by forces entirely outside our control. I am committed to doing this in a thoughtful, collaborative, proactive fashion that ensures UNCG's continued commitment to our mission and values. I am asking for your help with this process.

1. **Academic Portfolio Review:** I have attached a draft document that describes a proposed academic portfolio review process and timeline (this draft document will also be posted on the academic program review [website](#)). The draft was developed by deans and me, informed by the faculty draft that emerged from the Faculty/Staff Senate Open Space session. Please review this draft carefully and consider how it may be improved. I seek and sincerely welcome your feedback on the draft review process.

**Why:** The goal of the review is to identify potential changes to our academic portfolio at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. While the current enrollment decline, funding formula change, and budget situation have required immediate attention to our overall academic portfolio, it is also the case that universities should regularly review their academic portfolios as a best practice to inform budget allocations. Time is of the essence given our enrollment and budgetary situation. The proposed timeline provides engagement opportunities and allows us to act in an expedient manner.

**How** to provide feedback:

- Please send written comments directly to your academic dean by March 23, 2023.
- Join me and deans at an open forum in which we will discuss the draft review process. Two virtual open forums are scheduled, as follows:

Thursday, March 16th, 4:00–5:00 p.m. <https://uncg.zoom.us/j/99665565898>

Monday, March 20th, 4:00-5:00 p.m. <https://uncg.zoom.us/j/97133759441>

2. Academic Data Dashboards and rpk: As many of you know, an outside consulting firm known as rpk is helping us organize our data. It will not be making decisions about any changes at UNCG, large or small. I am committed to being transparent about all aspects of the portfolio review process, including all work undertaken by rpk. Please visit the [academic data dashboards website](#) where you can find regular updates on its work. There is also a [Frequently Asked Questions page](#), which is updated regularly. You can also find a [project feedback form](#) where you can submit a question. Feel free to also reach out to me if you have any questions.

In order to ensure rpk's numerical data is informed by a deeper understanding of what we do at UNCG, we have asked Katie Hagan and Mike Daly from rpk to join the meetings of standing committees and other bodies at UNCG on a regular basis (e.g., meetings of Provost's Council, Academic Council of Deans, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Associate and Assistant Deans, Department Heads/Chairs/Directors, Graduate Council, Undergraduate Studies Council, Data Stewards, and Data Trustees). At these meetings, they can provide updates, receive feedback, and answer questions. At the request of Faculty Senate Associate Chair Tami Draves, rpk representatives will join the Faculty Senate meeting on April 5th, at 3:00 p.m. to provide an update and to answer any questions.

3. Budget information: Please visit the [Faculty Senate Web page](#) where budget-related documents are posted. This includes recent communications from the Provost's Office, the new funding formula, the Chancellor's fall state of the university address, and HEERF allocations. Please contact me or the Faculty Senate leadership if you have suggestions for additional information that should be posted on this web page.
4. Enrollment update: Early indicators show that we are on track to meet our first-year and transfer enrollment goals. Although the national notification deadline is not until May 1st, first-year student commitments are up 29%. Housing contracts for new first-year students are tracking ahead of last year by 168 contracts and FAFSA submissions have increased over last year also. Vice Chancellor Tina McEntire is approaching the good news with caution since other universities are also reporting an increase in commitments but is pleased with the positive indicators thus far.
5. Compelled Speech Policy: The Board of Governor's passed a revision to Policy 300.5.1. "Political Activities of Employees" on February 23rd, which prohibits any UNC institution from asking individuals to "affirmatively ascribe to or opine about beliefs, affiliations, ideals, or principles regarding matters of contemporary political debate or social action as a condition to admission, employment, or professional advancement." Faculty senate passed a [resolution](#) affirming our community values in response to this policy revision. The UNC System Office intends to send guidance to campuses. The Chancellor has formed a working

group to examine UNCG's policies and procedures in light of the new policy and forthcoming UNC System guidance. Members of the working group include:

- Andrea Hunter, Chancellor's Fellow for Campus Climate (chair)
- Greg Bell, Dean, The Graduate School
- Jerry Blakemore, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel
- Stacey Krim, Assistant Professor and Chair, Faculty Senate EDI Committee
- Patricia Lynch, Director of Employee Relations and EEO/AA
- Tina McEntire, Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management
- Andrea Whitley, Associate Vice Provost, Faculty Personnel Services

If you have any questions, please forward them to Andrea Hunter, Chair of the working group.

I also want to acknowledge, alongside the focus on budgets and efficiencies and so on, that we are living through stressful times and facing significant challenges. I understand the need to come together, across disciplines, units, and ranks, to share what is important to us, envision our future together, and support each other. The Office of the Provost, the Weatherspoon Art Museum, and Faculty Senate invite faculty to join for a special gathering on **Thursday, March 23rd from 4:30 to 6:00 pm**. The gathering is the third in a series of events designed to deepen our connections, share what it means to be part of the UNCG faculty community, and celebrate all the ways that we continue to support each other. Click [here](#) to register for the event.

Please lean in and engage in shaping UNCG's future. Your insights, recommendations, and contributions are important.

Sincerely,

Debbie Storrs  
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor