



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF FACULTY GOVERNANCE

200B-204 CARR BUILDING  
CAMPUS BOX 9170  
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-9170

T 919.962.2146  
F 919.962.5479  
E [facgov@unc.edu](mailto:facgov@unc.edu)  
[www.facultygov.unc.edu](http://www.facultygov.unc.edu)

July 21, 2020

UNC Board of Governors  
Mr. Randall C. Ramsey, Chair

UNC Chapel Hill Board of Trustees  
Mr. Richard Y. Stevens, Chair

Dear Members of the UNC System Board of Governors and the UNC Chapel Hill Board of Trustees:

As Chair of the Faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I write with serious concerns about current plans for the fall reopening of our campus. I recognize that everyone at all levels of the UNC System has been working tirelessly since students were asked not to return to campus in March. Our Chancellor, Provost, and their teams have been creative and science-based in their approach to the vexing problems that accompany a return to campus this fall. Until the last few weeks, I have believed that the re-opening plan could work if all students, faculty, and staff would individually do their part for the good of all.

However, *The Roadmap to Fall* is based on a particular set of assumptions, many of which no longer hold. Specifically, in the spring, infectious disease and epidemiological experts were of the opinion that the COVID-19 virus would recede during the summer months. The main concern, therefore, was to avoid students being on campus during the onset of a “second wave” that was predicted to begin in November or December of 2020. However, as you are aware, we are still firmly in the midst of the first wave with numbers climbing in North Carolina as well as in 42 other states across the nation.

Next, the *Roadmap* was created with the belief that testing supplies would be abundant and test results could be quickly available. We are hearing that there is great concern about whether UNC will have the needed testing supplies to keep up with demand once 30,000 students return to campus since testing materials are being sent to the most hard-hit states. Also, the time from test to result varies greatly meaning that work and educational disruptions for students, faculty, and staff may be extreme.

Further, because mask-wearing has been deemed “controversial” in the larger society, concentrated health messaging along with stringent enforcement will likely be needed to ensure a level of compliance that will protect our campus community. Thus far, the messaging to students around masking has been limited. Given that students are on course to begin moving into dorms in two weeks, it is a real question as to whether there is adequate time for such messaging to be prepared and to penetrate our campus community.

Just last week, we learned about state plans for opening public schools. In the Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro school districts, schools will be completely remote for the first nine weeks beginning August 17<sup>th</sup>. In neighboring counties, such as Wake, Durham, and Chatham, where many faculty members and staff also live, school schedules include complicated rotation schemes meaning that primary and secondary students are in their respective schools on some days and attending school remotely on others. This presents a huge challenge for

faculty and staff members who are parents who will be attempting to navigate their children's education and child-care needs while trying to teach on campus.

We have also learned, through media reports, that many housekeepers on our campus and other system campuses do not believe they have the needed Personal Protective Equipment, training, or staff levels to take care of students in "quarantine dorms" or provide other services that may put them at higher risk of infection. Given that many housekeepers come from communities that are particularly hard hit by this virus, faculty are concerned that we are not living up to our stated principles regarding equity, inclusion, and anti-racism if we allow this situation to persist.

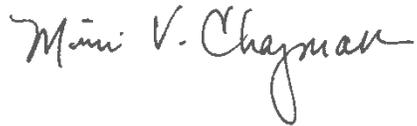
Taken together, these circumstances create an extraordinarily stressful reality for faculty, graduate student teachers, and staff. Many members of our community have been planning for a return to the classroom because they have been working off the same assumptions upon which the *Roadmap* was built. Now that those assumptions don't hold, they are questioning their ability to teach to the standards of our institution and the very high standards to which they hold themselves while juggling competing priorities and, in the context of an infection risk that has not abated. I recognize that not every person who is infected will have a bad outcome from this virus. But the virus is capricious and there is no way to know who will have a better or worse experience. Taken together the belief that we can safely return to campus together with 30,000 students is quickly eroding.

In the midst of these concerns came the breaking news on Friday that chancellors across the system were being asked to plan for a series of extreme budget scenarios. Everyone on our campus wants to do the work we love and upon which our state has always placed high value. Many of us have committed ourselves to teaching in person because we believe to do so is best for students, particularly those from more vulnerable communities, and also because we do not want to see anyone who works on our campus lose their livelihood. We are willing to do our part. But at this point, I believe that our University and perhaps the entire UNC system is being asked to turn straw into gold. Even our best UNC scientists cannot do that. In contrast, the federal government has resources to support public higher education should it choose to act and do so. Our state likewise has a significant "rainy day fund" that could be used to support public institutions of higher education through this crisis. If this pandemic does not meet the definition of a rainy day, I do not know what does.

Please know that I believe everyone involved is acting in good faith and is examining this difficult situation from every angle. The institutions of the UNC system vary widely in the size of the student body and degree of residential living. In addition, different parts of the state have different levels of viral spread. These differences speak to a need for local control and flexibility. UNC-Chapel Hill is looking at bringing 30,000 students from across the country onto our campus in two weeks while the virus continues to rage, testing supplies are becoming thin, and the normal routines of life are being upended. I am asking that you allow decision-making at the local level for our campus, so that our administrators, together with our local public health experts, can make the best decisions for our faculty, staff, and students. I also ask that you, as our Board of Trustees and Board of Governors, do your utmost to preserve the financial well-being of our institution, an institution that the state and,

indeed the world, is relying on for our COVID-19 research and for the life-changing work that is done every day, pandemic or not, on this campus.

With very best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mimi V. Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mimi V. Chapman, Ph.D., MSW  
Frank A. Daniels Distinguished Professor, School of Social Work  
Chair of the Faculty  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Cc:  
Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Provost Robert Blouin, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill