



Faculty Senate Meeting Chancellor's Report

Wednesday, February 23rd, 2022

Kelli R Brown

Unfortunately, I'm unable to join you all at this month's Faculty Senate meeting. I am currently attending the Board of Governors meeting in Chapel Hill. However, while I'm not there in person I wanted to start off this report with a quick message for all of you. I know this semester has not been easy so far, but I wanted to commend you for your hard work and resilience, and to say **Thank You** for all you do for WCU and our students. Together we are WCU strong!

SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

In order to make as much progress as possible on closing the most critical salary and compensation gaps, I have authorized \$1.7M in additional, discretionary salary actions as part of an annual raise process that will occur next month. These actions will come in addition to the 2.5% increase that was awarded in January and the next 2.5% increase that will be awarded in July. The additional raises will address some acute compression, inversion, and market gap issues. The specific actions are based on recommendations from the Faculty Salary Committee and the SHRA/EHRA Non-Faculty Salary Committee. While this is only a start and will not affect every faculty and staff member, I am grateful for the work of the salary committees and am glad that we were able to provide substantive additional funding to support progress in improving salaries and compensation. Provost Starnes' report will provide more details on the discretionary salary actions for faculty.

LEGISLATIVE & FOUNDATION BOARD UPDATE

WCU's next legislative agenda will be presented for approval at the Board of Trustees meeting in March. We've identified four legislative priorities for the upcoming short session and beyond. They are as follows:

- Salary increases for faculty/staff
- Merit scholarship program
- Expansion of engineering programs to meet regional industry needs

- Targeted renovation or new construction for an engineering building

Additionally, the Board of Governors is working on the UNC System legislative agenda. They will have a finalized version in April 2022. WCU's agenda items are being considered for inclusion in the overall System agenda.

I'm thrilled to share that WCU has a new government relations liaison. Following a national search, Ms. Christy Agner has been appointed to the position of Deputy Chief of Staff/Director of External Relations— and started February 1. In a short amount of time, Christy has already been to Raleigh to advocate for WCU. I encourage Faculty Senate leadership to invite Christy to provide updates on governmental activities and WCU's advocacy efforts.

We also have a new Assistant Vice Chancellor for Engagement— Mr. James D. Hogan. James is an alumnus of WCU and will be a key part of the Advancement team with a focus on alumni engagement. James started January 1.

The WCU Foundation Board met on February 4th. The Board discussed Western Carolina University in a post pandemic world and what we want to showcase moving forward. One of the attendees left us with a thought-provoking statement; “we need to start defining Western and stop defending it.” Moving forward we will all need to think about how we can change our perspective and how others view WCU.

UNC System Office Initiatives

Meeting and Tour at WCU: As a reminder, the UNC Board of Governors will be holding their April 2022 meeting here on WCU's campus April 6-7, 2022. That meeting will also include a tour of our campus for BOG members and other visitors. Committee meetings on April 6th and the full board meeting on April 7th will be held in the University Center. These meetings, like WCU's Board of Trustees' meetings, are public and, when possible, I encourage you to attend or view the livestream. A lunch for the Board on the 6th will be held at the Ramsey Center. We anticipate a large number of external visitors to attend this Board meeting and there will be impact on campus services and parking during those two days. WCU Parking Services and University Communications will begin reminding faculty, staff, and students where parking and activities will be impacted in the weeks leading up to the meeting.

Strategic Plan Update: The UNC System is updating their strategic plan, *Higher Expectations*. To solicit campus feedback, the System Office will be administering a campus survey and hosting virtual townhalls at each university in the UNC System to allow faculty and staff to ask questions and voice their opinions. Dr. Tim Metz is WCU's point of contact. You can expect to see information on this soon.

Mission Statement Review: The Board of Governors will consider revisions to institutional mission statements during their July 2022 meeting. All institutions are asked to carefully review their current mission statements. Campuses can opt to keep their current statements or offer revisions. Drafts of any proposed revisions to current missions are due to the UNC System Office by June 1, 2022.

I have asked Provost Starnes and Chief of Staff Melissa Wargo to lead a campus task force to complete this task in an expedited fashion. The task force will include representatives from WCU's campus governance groups including Faculty and Staff Senates, Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Association. Ideally, the updated mission statement should clarify WCU's role and programming in the greater Asheville-Hendersonville area. It should also restate our role in economic development in Asheville and its surrounding communities.

Funding Model: In my last report, I mentioned that the UNC System Board of Governors is considering significant changes to the current funding model. WCU has provided feedback to the UNC System Office. In all, the proposed changes would have a mixed impact on WCU. The proposed new model would incentivize in-state, undergraduate students. In some years when in-state enrollment is high, this would be to WCU's benefit and, in others, it could have a negative impact. Additionally, the new model would not fund higher expense programs like nursing and engineering at the same rate as the past model. Summer funding would also be included in the new model, which is lacking under the current model. There would be a transition year that would allow institutions to mitigate any negative effect of the new model.

Mr. Mike Byers has provided WCU's feedback on the proposed model to the Board and changes have already been proposed to mitigate some of the impact described above. We expect the Board of Governors to take up a vote on the new funding model at the April meeting, which will be hosted here in Cullowhee. If passed by the Board of Governors and approved by the General Assembly in the short session this spring, the new funding model would go into effect the next year.

Project Kitty Hawk: Following its approval, the Project Kitty Hawk Board of Directors had its first meeting on Wednesday, February 9th. At this meeting they named Randy Ramsey as the Chair of the Board of Directors. Also on the board are three chancellors from other North Carolina universities; Dr. Nancy Cable, from UNC Asheville, Dr. Franklin Gillam, from UNC Greensboro, and Dr. Phillip Rogers, from East Carolina University. The Board also appointed Wil Zemp as president of the Kitty Hawk project at this first meeting.

Employee Engagement Survey: The 2022 UNC System Employee Engagement Survey will launch March 28th and is scheduled to be open for three weeks. The 2022 version will be implemented as a “pulse” survey and will be roughly half the length of the 2018 and 2020 versions. Specifically, the 2022 survey will focus on three areas:

- A set of baseline trend data from past surveys
- Diversity and inclusion statements
- Statements specific to institutional actions taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic

ROI Study: Information on this study will be provided in the Provost’s report.

HONORING OUR PROMISE TOUR

The *Honoring Our Promise* tour kicked off in Winston-Salem on February 7th. The first stop went well, and it was so refreshing to connect with people face-to-face again and to spread the good news about Western Carolina University. I look forward to continuing to do this along the tour while simultaneously developing a new network and amplifying the WCU message to new people. By the end of this tour, I want as many people as possible to know all about the incredible work we’re doing here at Western.

UNIVERSITY ACCOLADES/IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

February is Black History Month and I encourage all of you to check out *The Black Fantastic* series on WCU’s website. *The Black Fantastic* is a multimedia artistic look at some of the people helping to shape and mentor our students and others in the campus community. It’s a wonderful display of our Black faculty and staff and their contributions to Western.

February is also I Love WCU month. This is our 6th annual I Love WCU month, and I urge you to get involved. There are several ways to do that.

- You can make a gift at give.wcu.edu
- You can share your feelings about what makes WCU great on social media
- You can engage in a service project to help our community
- Or you can check out the new #checkITout partnership in Technology Commons that promotes the program that allows patrons to borrow tech equipment free of charge for personal or professional use. A contest using that equipment to create something— a video, photo, audio file, graphic, etc.— that expresses why you love WCU will run through February and three random winners of the program could win big prizes like a Nintendo Switch, Air Pod Pros, or an Echo Show.
- No matter what you choose, just get involved!

The School of Nursing has received a \$2.2 million grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administrations to provide support for nursing students from low-income, first-generation and minority background. The funding will create a four-year Pathways to Equity in Nursing program, which will provide scholarship and stipend support for up to 25 students per year.

Western Carolina University's Forensic Anthropology program is currently expanding through outreach and technical assistance with cold cases and welcoming an ever-increasing number of students. Recently a research team from the program assisted in helping locate Sgt. Francis W. Wiemerslage, a missing airman from World War II. The program is also now providing annual training on the analysis of burned human remains and the investigation of fire-related deaths for local and state agencies.

In Catamount Athletics, WCU's sophomore infielder, Pascanel Ferreras was selected as the preseason SoCon Player of the Year by D1 Baseball and third-team Preseason All-America by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association. WCU's softball team also saw praise as they were picked to finish second in the 2022 Southern Conference preseason coaches' poll. Also, softball pitcher, Jayme Eilers, was named SoCon Pitcher of the Week on February 14th. And on February 2nd, we were thrilled to welcome 29 new football players during Signing Day.

And, finally, while she only attended WCU for a very short time in Spring 2010, we wish many congratulations and best wishes to Broadway and film star, Ariana DeBose on her recent best supporting actress Academy Award nomination for her role as Anita in Steven Spielberg's West Side Story. Way to go, Ariana!

REMINDERS

A few reminders to keep in mind as we move forward:

- The Board of Trustees' next meeting is March 3rd-4th. At this meeting they will conduct discussions regarding diversity and inclusion, academic affairs, finance and audit, and administration, governance, and trusteeship.
- Spring Break will be March 7th-11th and I encourage you all to use the time to rest and recharge for the remainder of the semester.
- The Board of Governors meeting is happening now, February 23rd-24th at the UNC System Office. Their next meeting will be held here at WCU April 6th-7th.

Thank you for all you do for Western Carolina University!