

## **STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT ANDREW POWELL'S PREPARED REMARKS**

UNC Board of Trustees Meeting

January 22, 2015

- The past two months since the last meeting have been successful for the student body, and I have a lot I would like to update the Board on.
- Before I jump into those details, however, I would like to extend my thanks to Chancellor Folt and the Board for their leadership throughout the course of last semester. You navigated a very tough time with poise, integrity, and determination. The student body sincerely appreciates your dedication to the University and to all of us. We know we are in great hands, and we appreciate all that you have done and are continuing to do.
- I'd also like to give a personal thank you to Vice Chancellor Crisp. We heard a beautiful presentation by him yesterday at the University Affairs Committee. Carolina is extraordinarily fortunate to have him as our Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Thank you for the work that you do every day.
- Soon after the November meeting of this board, we had a student, Sarah Bufkin, named as UNC's 49th Rhodes Scholar. Around the same time, Sasha Seymore and Thomas Golden were named as Mitchell Scholars. I'd like to congratulate all three on their accomplishments - the rest of the student body is very proud of them.
- Before the break, I attended the BOG meeting where Carolina's centers and institutes were presenting. I talked there about that many ways these centers benefit students, and I thank that chair of the working group Jim Holmes for the chance to share at that meeting.
- Over the Winter Break, Tafadzwa Matika and the rest of the I Have a Dream Campaign finalized their work. They have put together a wonderful photo collage showcasing the diverse dreams and aspirations of the student body. The Board went to visit the exhibit yesterday led by the Chancellor and I think all in attendance would agree it was an inspiring display.
- I'd like to encourage the student body to channel the energy that Taf's team has captured through the rest of this semester, and continue to find ways to demonstrate and celebrate Carolina's diversity. Student Government will be working hard on facilitating some important conversations about some of the more sensitive and delicate issues on our minds - particularly about race, inclusivity, and community. These are important conversations, and we in student leadership look forward to partnering with the administration in creating this sort of dialogue. I know these are conversations that the Board cares deeply about as well.

- In addition to student government's efforts to strengthen the University community here in Chapel Hill, we will also be in Raleigh engaging with our elected representatives - discussing the vital role our universities play in the state's economy, and the importance of continued state support to ensure that Carolina can drive economic growth by delivering an affordable, world class education and fostering state-of-the-art research. While almost every state cut its higher education budget in response to the recent economic downturn, most states have started increasing support again. Only 8 states, including North Carolina, have failed to do so. We'd like to see North Carolina leading again with strong state investments in higher education, so as the legislature begins its session, we plan to make a number of trips over to Raleigh.
- This spring we'll also be facing an issue that has been a long time in the making. Since the fall, when the Student Government's advisory group to the chancellor raised a number of technical issues around contextualized transcripts and requested a delay in its implementation, student government has been working closely with administrators and faculty to have a serious discussion about the merits of this policy. While I have great respect for everyone who has worked to craft this policy over the past few years, I continue to have significant concerns.
- Chief among my concerns is that contextualized grading will negatively influence the student learning experience. We have faculty at UNC who are leading the nation in classroom redesign and active learning models. Their work is distinguishing UNC as a leading force in rethinking the classroom experience. We heard from a couple of our most innovative faculty at our September meeting, and their results were really compelling. A common thread in all these active learning courses - courses where we are consistently improving student performance and narrowing the achievement gap - is the key importance of peer learning in these models. We are creating classroom environments where students work alongside their peers, and these peer-to-peer collaborations are what make active learning so effective. I fear that contextualized grading will hurt this collaborative culture that we have worked so hard to build by giving a student incentives not to help the students sitting next to them.
- So over the next three months we're going to be leading a conversation about whether contextualized transcripts will help or hurt this university. Lots of great work has gone into them and the data that we can now access is amazing. But what's becoming increasingly clear is that putting median grades and a "schedule point average" on student transcripts won't combat grade inflation, and could very likely lead to increased competition, disincentives to take small seminars and honors classes, and technical confusion from transcript readers and registrars trying to crunch UNC's grade data. And above all else, it would be an institutional move in the wrong direction, towards an old

school of thinking and away from the way of the future, a way that UNC is poised to lead.