

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

UNC Board of Trustees Meeting

November 20, 2014

"Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the opportunity to make some remarks this morning. From my first day as student body president, I have done my best to serve the student body by representing the needs and interests of all students. To accomplish this, my first priority when I took office was to recruit a diverse team of students from many different parts of campus.

From day one I also knew that the release of the Wainstein Report would be perhaps the most significant event during my short year of service. So naturally, a major constituency I hoped to include in student government was student-athletes.

Traditionally student government and student athletes have been somewhat siloed, as sometimes happens in large organizations. So we revamped our outreach plan, and I found that many student-athletes were eager to be involved, we just had not done a good job of reaching them before. I asked Allen Champagne, a football player, to join my leadership team; Houston Summers from the track team joined the Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor; Benton Moss, a baseball player, began working closely with FAC, and a number of others joined a variety of other committees - working on wide range of issues.

Closer to the release of the report, I had many conversations with student athletes. Frankly, I heard some saddening things. A player on the women's soccer team told me that she no longer wears her athletics gear to class because she is worried she will be treated differently. Sadly her sentiments are not unique, as I heard similar concerns from members of the cross country, swimming, and track teams, just to name a few. Other athletes have said they are reluctant to provide instructors with their athletic travel forms, preferring even to take an unexcused absence rather than it be known they are an athlete.

These times have been tough on all of us, but I think particularly tough on many of our current students, all of whom have done nothing wrong. Often times, even well-intentioned conversations about structural or institutional issues can come across as personal attacks. Many of our student athletes feel like some comments on athletics here at UNC are questioning their place at this university. So I urge everyone - please take extra care to ensure that comments about perceived problems with macro-issues do not come off as problems with the students themselves.

We should never have a student here at UNC who feels like they do not belong at Carolina. The week following the report's release there was an event on the steps of South Building discussing race at UNC. The next day, at a student forum that Student Government hosted many of the same issues, concerns and emotions arose in the Q&A.

Students, whether they are an athlete, a student in the African, African-American and Diaspora studies major, or any other identity or group, should never feel excluded from campus life or the Carolina community. This report, while marking a difficult and sad time in UNC's history, has also pushed us to talk about hard issues, issues that would not be discussed in a more normal time. This is a chance for us to come together and talk about issues of race, of academic freedom, of the role and value of athletics at UNC, and together to reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of this university. These are not easy topics but they're essential to the University's integrity and success. I'm looking forward to working with everyone in this room to continue these essential conversations as we go forward.

But for now, I am calling on my fellow students to show our support to our student athletes. Let's send the message, loud and clear - student athletes are an important part of the student body and they all deserve our support.

So on Tuesday, Dec 2nd I invite everyone - students, faculty, staff, alumni - to wear Carolina blue for a day of support for our student athletes. I am requesting that everyone join me in telling our students, plain and simple - we support you. In fact, we are proud of you. And we are so glad that you are here at Carolina.

With that Mr. Chairman I conclude my remarks."